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J. A. S.

THE WAY INTO SUPERSENSIBLE WORLDS

(MODERN RAJA-YOGA)

SECOND EDITION

KRAKOW — 1936
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Editorial Note (2026)

The book first appeared under the cryptonym J.A.S. and under the title *Wstęp w światy nadzmysłowe (Radża-Joga nowoczesna)* [*Entrance into Supersensible Worlds (Modern Raja-Yoga)*]. Although the title page of the first edition bears the year 1923, the author himself, in the second edition, dates the first edition to 1922. The second edition appeared in 1936 under the same cryptonym, J.A.S., and under the title *Droga w światy nadzmysłowe (Radża-Joga nowoczesna)* [*The Way into Supersensible Worlds (Modern Raja-Yoga)*]. Its author is Józef Świtkowski (1876–1942), a well-known Polish esotericist who, in the 1924 Polish edition of *Śankaraczarja — Klejnot Mądrości Wschodu* [*Shankaracharya — The Jewel of Eastern Wisdom*] (p. 53), acknowledges that he is the author of *Wstęp w światy nadzmysłowe*.

Preface

to the First Edition (1922).

This book is intended for those few who no longer regard the supersensible worlds as something legendary or doubtful, and who therefore need no rational or experimental proofs to establish their existence. It is intended, moreover, for only a small part even of those few, for most of them will consider the way indicated in this book too long and arduous, believing that the directions for "hatha-yoga" and for a supposed ancient "raja-yoga," found in various printed compilations, will likewise suffice to gain them entrance into supersensible worlds. If the supersensible worlds obtainable by predominantly mechanical practices are enough for them, then clearly they know and desire no others, for they are not yet mature enough for them.

It is therefore to the mature that I address this work. I speak to them as to mature people; I do not linger over elementary notions, and I assume, moreover, that they have already acquired a stock of metaphysical concepts by studying at least some of the works quoted in my book. If they are willing to read attentively and, above all, thoroughly, they will discover that this book, modest though it is in size, contains enough material for years of work upon oneself. It is not enough merely to read and understand its contents: one must live according to them, embody them in one's character, and rebuild oneself from the foundations. And that is more difficult than performing mechanical exercises, presented uncritically or with deliberate ill will in various manuals with sensational titles and contents that are mostly worthless or harmful.

I do not thereby overestimate the value of my work. It may indeed appear harmful to those who would gladly omit the requirement of raising their ethical level. For them and for their aims it really is harmful; but for those for whom I wrote it, it will be a way — difficult and burdensome perhaps, yet sure — leading them into those supersensible worlds for which they long. I give here not a single direction that I have not myself tested in practice. It may be that some readers will find these directions too few; but once they have worked through them, they will have matured enough to discover further ones independently. Perhaps then they will set them down in a book more extensive and more perfect than this work of mine, the first of its kind in the Polish language and therefore, no doubt, not free from shortcomings and imperfections.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

During the fourteen years that have elapsed since the first edition of this book, some readers have presumably already reached the stage of "illumination," others still remain at the stage of "preparation," while still others may have put the book aside in discouragement as unsuitable for them. Although I took pains to keep my name from becoming known to readers, during those fourteen years I received many letters: some expressing joy at having found a way of life that brought inner happiness, some asking that doubts be clarified, and still others requesting certain corrections and amendments in a new edition.

These requests followed two principal lines: the removal of Sanskrit words as allegedly superfluous, and taking a definite position on meat, stimulants, and bodily pleasures. Let my answer to these requests be the fact that in the second edition I have left the contents of the book almost unchanged; I have added only two short passages explaining more emphatically the subordinate role played by the physical organism in spiritual development.

The title of the book contains the words "Modern Raja-Yoga"; the book is therefore meant to connect the ancient Indian raja-yoga with the contemporary culture of the West. That culture has not yet succeeded, in any European language, in creating words for concepts designated in Indian philosophy by Sanskrit names; those names therefore cannot be replaced by others in my book. I have nevertheless tried to arrange its contents in such a way that even a reader who attaches no importance to technical terms may undertake the work upon himself that leads to the gate of the "Path."

The second group of readers' demands, concerning prohibitions on meat and stimulants, rests simply upon a misunderstanding. Prohibitions of this sort may have a certain significance in manuals dealing with the cultivation of the body, hatha-yoga, or ceremonial magic; but in a book concerned exclusively with the cultivation of the spirit they would contradict its very contents. To attach importance to the care of the body, even merely in the form of restrictions and prohibitions, would prove only that in the reader's conviction the body deserves special attention, whereas it ought not to take more of his attention than a sensible man devotes to his animals or his machines.

I add these two explanations here as a supplement to the preface to the first edition, which in all other respects I leave unchanged.

The Author.

Literature

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(Letters indicate the title of the work and the author's name; Roman numerals indicate the volume and Arabic numerals the page.)

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B. H. P. Blavatsky: "Lotusblüten" (1900).
C. Dr. R. Steiner: "Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse höherer Welten".
D. H. P. Blavatsky: "The Voice of the Silence".
E. Thomas à Kempis: "The Imitation of Christ".
F. M. Collins: "Light on the Path".
G. Alcyone (Krishnamurti): "At the Feet of the Master".
H. C. W. Leadbeater: "Das innere Leben" (2 vols.).
J. Dr. R. Steiner: "Die Geheimwissenschaft".
K. Dr. J. Kerner: "Die Seherin von Prevorst".
L. Patanjali: "Yoga-Sutra" (Oppermann's translation).

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I. Aim and Means

If you have taken this book in hand, then perhaps, besides curiosity, you have also been moved by the desire to find a way that you yourself might follow, instead of merely reading about the way others have followed and still follow. Perhaps you have long been wandering and searching because you feel that the broad, well-trodden road on which everyone around you walks is no longer suitable for you. It may already seem too simple, too easy, and above all too level. Everyone moves along it slowly and comfortably, without effort, but also without vistas; they need give little of themselves upon it, but they receive little in return. You, however, would rather offer more in order to attain more; you would rather make even the most difficult efforts, give your whole self, and in return attain as much as those efforts are worth, as much as you yourself are worth.

It is well that the other road, broad and crowded, has already become too level for you. It is well that you wish to leave it and enter upon a shorter and steeper path, so that you may climb more quickly toward the summit. This speaks well of you, for it shows that you have already matured enough to enter upon the "Path." Yet examine yourself carefully and measure your strength. Judge yourself sternly and soberly: do you truly wish to give your whole self, without reserve, or will you soon become discouraged and fall from the Path back onto the old comfortable road? You will fall from it more than once before you learn to keep your footing steadily upon the steep incline. The only thing that matters is that, whenever you fall, you rise again quickly despite bruises and wounds, that you do not pity yourself, but immediately strain every power to climb back onto the Path. What matters is that you ask yourself honestly whether your enthusiasm for entering the Path is not merely a passing whim, or, worse still, discouragement with ordinary life caused by some failure.

Since, however, you have taken this book in hand and wish to read it, perhaps your intentions are sincere and lasting. Perhaps in your present life you truly find nothing that seems purposeful and worthy of effort. Perhaps you look upon your fellow men as upon children whom you have outgrown, and you wish to abandon their thoughtless games and turn to something more serious. If their life seems to you senseless and shallow not merely for a moment, under the influence of some disappointment, but if even amid success and satisfaction you constantly feel something like emptiness and incompleteness, then perhaps you are truly mature enough for the Path.

Remember, however, that the Path about which you are reading here is the shortest and steepest of all, and that very soon you will have departed too far from the comfortable road to be able afterwards to return to it.

There are paths, perhaps somewhat longer, but not so steep and arduous, and above all not diverging so far from the road upon which the enormous

majority of mankind slowly advances. On those paths you remain in constant contact with all that people call the world; at every moment the way of retreat remains open. They are not so steep and difficult, but they too lead upward, though less rapidly. The road of scientific study, artistic creation, social work — these are paths too difficult for idlers, yet no longer inaccessible to you. Perhaps one of them will suffice; for you may put as much effort into each as you yourself choose, and on each you may rise as high as you wish. They are more convenient inasmuch as they demand less labour upon oneself, directing activity for the most part outward, toward objects rather than toward the subject; and that is easier.

If even this seems too easy to you, remember further that in work upon yourself there are also different paths, lying between two poles as distant from one another as hatha-yoga[*)] on the one hand and the way of the Saints on the other. Do not be disturbed by seeing things so radically different placed side by side. They too are paths, and by no means easy ones. Yet upon them one may still expect something for oneself; on entering them one may say: I give all that I am, my entire worth, and in return I expect as much as I am worth. On the Path of which you read here, however, you cannot say this. Nothing awaits you here: no advantage, no reward, only the consciousness that you have fulfilled everything of which you were capable, that you have wasted nothing and neglected nothing.

It is therefore necessary that you make the aim toward which you wish to strive as clear to yourself as possible. It is not enough to say vaguely: "I am not satisfied with the life lived by everyone around me; I must find something more for myself." The question is what that "something more" looks like in your imagination and wherein it consists. If you desire greater satisfaction for yourself, you will not find it on this Path; turn then to hatha-yoga. If curiosity about supersensible worlds leads you, you will come to know them on the Path, but only when you cease desiring to know them. If you wish to acquire magical powers and miraculous capacities, you will acquire them, but only when it has become completely impossible for you to wish to use them for personal ends.

Thus the Path promises you little. If, nevertheless, you seek it in spite of this — perhaps precisely because it promises you no personal advantages — then you are truly mature enough for it.

You are mature enough for it because you have outgrown the mistaken belief that there can be any real good other than the good of the whole.

Your aim must be utterly selfless. You must desire nothing for yourself, covet nothing for your own pleasure or personal advantage. Your one desire, your one endeavour, must always be only the good of the whole: the good not only of all human beings without distinction of nation, race, creed, culture, or moral level, but also the good of the entire universe — the good of spirits and angels no less than of animals, plants, and every creature. Do not think that you are too weak for your powers to be of any use to angels or plants; for once you are upon the Path your powers will grow to a superhuman, almost inconceivable

[*)] "Hatha-yoga" is the name of one of the methods of developing paranormal capacities, which arose in medieval India. It is a mechanical method and does not confer high or lasting faculties. It is practised, for example, by fakirs.

magnitude. You will be drawing ever nearer to God, and therefore you will participate ever more fully in Divine omniscience and omnipotence.

But God wants nothing for Himself, and you are to walk the Divine Path; therefore you too must rid yourself more and more of egoism and forget yourself increasingly. Are you ready to strike out your "I" once and for all? Always to say, not with your lips only but from the deepest conviction: "Not my will, but Thine be done"? If so, if you are truly and sincerely ready to renounce every thought of yourself, every egoism, then you are mature for the Path. Enter it boldly, then, but enter it at once, today; for if you begin to hesitate and postpone, you are evidently not yet mature enough for it.

You will soon discover how much this Path gives you, how many priceless treasures you will find upon it precisely because you do not desire or seek them. First of all you will find an immense peace, yet sweet and quiet, because it is the peace of God. You will find health of soul, and even physical health, so flourishing and enduring that the most favourable external conditions could not give you its equal. You will find boundless knowledge — not book knowledge, acquired by memory and concepts, but direct knowledge — knowledge one possesses because one sees and understands. You will also find what people call clairvoyance although they do not believe in it: you will be able to look into the interior of the earth and into distant worlds, upon human souls and angelic spirits; you will be able to converse both with the so-called dead and with the living, however far away. Finally, you will find all those magical powers and incomprehensible forces that have earned men the names of saints or sorcerers; all of them, without exception, will be at your unrestricted disposal.

You will find all this upon the Path — or rather you will find it successively, more and more with every step, without any effort or striving on your part. You will see yourself surrounded by wealth, power, honours, and fame; but all these will already have lost their value for you. They will be only ever-new and ever-heavier burdens, ever-widening duties; yet you will be equal to them all because you will desire nothing for yourself.

Until now you have been seeking this Path without perhaps even knowing clearly what you sought. You felt only that beyond all you had hitherto learned, discovered, and experienced in life, there must be something more — something different, higher, and above all more real. What is most real and actual to other people has already lost for you the value of something real and true. You sought something beyond all this because the ordinary, low, everyday human desires and strivings no longer sufficed you. And do you know why they no longer suffice? Because something more already lives in you than in your fellow men. The Divine Spark already lives in you. The same Spark lives in all your fellow men, but they do not know it. For them it would still be too early to feel that they bear it within. You, however, are already beginning to feel it, perhaps unconsciously at first, but unmistakably. In your soul, in the depths of your being, something hitherto unknown to you is beginning to live, just as in the womb of a young mother there begins to awaken the life of a child still unknown to her. The Divine Spark begins to live in you because you have already matured enough for it to begin a conscious life. In others it sleeps; in you it is already awakening. And that is why you long for something unknown, something truly real and actual that you have not found in the world.

You already feel clearly and beyond doubt that there is something in you beyond your bodies, your coverings visible or intangible. You know that after passing through the gate of death you will cast them off one by one: first the physical body, then the etheric, later the astral, and finally the mental. And who will cast them off? You yourself — the real you. You already feel that these bodies of yours are not you; they are only garments for you. You dwell in them, but you are not them. What, then, will remain of you when you have cast them all off in turn? — You yourself will remain: the Divine Spark, the higher self. What will remain is precisely that which in you is immortal, real, actual, that which endures beyond death and beyond every dying.

This immortal part of you is awakening to consciousness, and therefore what still fully suffices your fellow men no longer suffices you. That is why you begin to seek something more: because you already have something more within you. You have learned to hear the soundless voice that speaks in you without words, your voice of conscience. You can already obey it, perhaps not always, but in most cases. It is this voice that tells you that your coverings are not you; it is this voice that gives you the feeling of dissatisfaction with yourself and with the world. You may still disobey it many times, but you can no longer choke or silence it within yourself, for the higher self, the Divine Spark, already lives in you.

And thus your aim begins to take a somewhat clearer shape before your eyes. You would have the ruler within you be not what is mortal and transient, but what is eternal, what is Divine. You no longer wish to be the servant of your bodies, even of those as subtle as the astral or mental. You wish to learn to rule them, to use them as instruments obedient to your higher self. And you know that nowhere in the world will you learn this; that is why you wander and seek.

Until now your bodies have ruled you, doing with you what they pleased, and you obeyed without resistance because you did not know that one could disobey, or how. But your higher self is already awakening and demanding its rights. God within you is to assume the rule, whereas until now the animal within you has ruled. If you were to begin a struggle with yourself, that is, with your bodies,[*)] you would not attain the aim. The matter is not one of division, not of struggle, but of union. What is lower in you must come into accord with your higher self, must be harmonised and united with it. The tendencies of these two parts must no longer diverge, but become concordant. Your lower self is to unite with the higher. Such union is called *yoga* in Sanskrit; if you prefer a modern word, call it synthesis.

Your aim, then, is yoga. Do not shrink from calling it by name merely because it was already known to the ancient Indians. Since their time humanity has advanced very far in development, but not yet so far that yoga is no longer needed today. You can see for yourself how few people around you are already united with their higher self. Of course, yoga as an idea, as an aim, is one thing, while the methods of attaining that aim, the systems of yoga, are another. The aim has remained the same from time immemorial, but the means change with

[*)] Details concerning these "bodies," or coverings (kosha), will be found in Chodkiewicz's book *Anatomy of Man's Invisible Bodies*.

the progress of humanity. Today the old Indian raja-yoga would not only be unfruitful; it would even mean a certain retrogression in development. Among the ancient Indians, union of the higher self with the lower was not yet possible in the waking state, in ordinary daytime consciousness, for man of that age had not developed far enough. The attainment of yoga, or union, was then accessible only in the state of samadhi, that is, in a condition which today we would call trance or magnetic sleep. Today, by contrast, what is required is not yoga in brief moments of unconscious trance, but yoga in the waking state, with full consciousness preserved. And this can now be attained because our development has advanced correspondingly. Do not therefore be repelled by the word *yoga*, or by other Sanskrit words, since we have no Polish names for them.

You will understand that such a modern yoga must differ from the ancient Indian yoga if you regard it as a "Path," as a method.

Many things which the ancient Indians first had to develop by methodical exercises you have no need to develop, for they are already formed and developed in you. On the other hand, you must cultivate and develop what was unknown even by name to the ancient Indians and utterly inaccessible even to their raja-yogis, because men of that time were not yet mature enough for it. Do not therefore identify the method of raja-yoga with the aim of raja-yoga, just as it would be mistaken to identify the method of Egyptian or Christian initiation with its aim.

What you need, then, are means; and these are the means you have been seeking without being able to find them anywhere. Perhaps you have encountered books with more or less mysterious titles, claiming to contain genuine directions for exercises in yoga; but your infallible inner voice has already told you that those directions and teachings cannot be trusted. Here you have yet another proof of how well your Divine Spark can govern you when you allow it to speak, when you surrender control of yourself to it. If it were to tell you that this very book you are reading is bad for you, stop reading without hesitation, for your soundless voice will always advise you best. But it will not forbid you to read here; people might rather try to forbid you — and whether you should obey them your conscience will again tell you.

The choice of means with which to practise yoga, that is, to enter upon the "Path," is likewise best made by the voice of conscience, your higher self, for it alone knows infallibly what is suitable for it. Excellent means are to be found in a little book which you have known since childhood and may perhaps still know by heart. It is the catechism, the most ordinary Christian catechism. It will lead you onto the Path just as surely as the rules of the most secret schools, provided of course that you not only know it by heart but always put it into practice in your life. The catechism seems unintelligible or insufficient only because people know it from reading, not from embodying it in themselves. They speak words instead of carrying out in life what those words contain. Perhaps, however, the way of the catechism seems too slow to you. Then take up another little book, probably also familiar to you: Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*. You will no longer say that this path is too simple if you have read the book attentively and with understanding. You may instead say that it is less accessible to you because it was intended for monks while you

live in the world. Yet anyone who truly wills it can imitate Christ. That is why in the following chapters you will frequently encounter quotations from this little book, and you will see how incomparable it is. What I shall say further can at most supplement it, never improve upon it.

The titles of these two little books have already shown you by what means you may gain entrance to the Path. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments"!

Without them you will never reach the gate of the Path, even if you master the rules of every secret school. At that gate you must be not only mature, but prepared. You must prepare a fitting dwelling for your higher self, for the Divine Spark within you. That dwelling must be sufficiently bright and clean. Hence you must purify not only the physical body, but also the soul, that is, the invisible bodies. You must work upon the physical body just as upon the etheric, astral, and mental bodies — upon all that you have hitherto called yourself. And this work upon yourself is nothing other than what is contained in the catechism or in *The Imitation of Christ*.

Do not imagine that this work upon yourself can be omitted or replaced by anything else. There are paths which do indeed give methods of acquiring certain higher powers without such moral work upon oneself. But those substitute methods also give substitute powers: surrogates, imitations, not what you are seeking. Your inner voice has already told you, moreover, that your way does not lie upon those paths. They are for those who cannot yet, or will not, follow another path. But you already can, and above all you will: strongly and sincerely.

"When the pupil is ready, the Teacher appears" — says an ancient maxim. You must therefore be prepared before you find the Master. Without such preparation all your attempts to draw the Master's attention to yourself will be vain. Be firmly certain, however, that the Master will inevitably draw near when you are "ready," but not before. If, then, it seems to you that you ought already to have found the Teacher and have not yet met Him, you are evidently not sufficiently prepared, not yet worthy that He should look upon you. Yet never doubt that you will be worthy as soon as you have prepared yourself to the required degree.

Annie Besant rightly writes (A, 273): "Entrance upon this Path brings a man to the position of a pupil, or probationary journeyman, and one of the Masters takes him under His care, recognising him as one who has stepped aside from the broad road of evolution and seeks a Master who will lead him along a steeper path ... and guide his steps. This Teacher awaits him already at the entrance to the Path; and although the novice does not yet know his Master, the Master already knows him, sees his efforts, guides his steps, places him in the situations best suited to his development, and watches over him with a mother's care. The road may seem lonely and dark, but the Friend is always at hand...."

You must become accustomed to this darkness and solitude from the very entrance to the Path, for they will accompany you through the greater part of the way. Remember that you are climbing upward, above the earth.

Until now you have walked upon the earth, surrounded by people, and everything seemed full of movement, sound, and light. Now you enter a region

where there is very much space and very few people; you enter untrodden paths. In truth the road you have hitherto followed only seemed crowded and full, as you yourself know. You felt loneliness and emptiness amid the clamour of the world. The further solitude, therefore, should not frighten you. Besides, it will only be apparent, for the Master is always "at hand," although you do not see Him.

Over every step of yours He watches, that Great Invisible One, and He guides every step. As soon as you enter the Path you will quickly perceive the influence of His care. Your life, until now rather even and quiet, will begin to change continually, as though its pulse were quickening. Conditions alternately comfortable and difficult will succeed one another more and more rapidly; periods of intense activity will in turn give way to dull and empty intervals, after which weeks or months of doubled duties will come again — burdens that an ordinary person would not have the strength to bear. This rapid succession of storm and fair weather is sent upon you by the Master so that you may experience the mutability and transience of everything earthly and more easily detach your thought from temporal things. Everything you desire you will have, but never at the moment when you desire it; only when you have ceased desiring it — so that you may learn that its value lies not in the thing itself but in your desire. Persons or things to which you have become most strongly attached will leave you precisely when possession of them seems most secure. At such moments loneliness and emptiness will seem almost inhuman, unbearable; but remember that then the Master will be especially near you. And after all, you resolved to offer everything and renounce everything merely to gain entrance to the Path, to follow in the footsteps of Him who "had not where to lay His head."

These, then, are the means leading to the gate of the Path. It is no wonder that beyond that gate you meet so few people. For them it is still too heavy and too difficult: to renounce everything, every personal attachment, every thought of oneself. That is why it is so empty and dark there. But dark only for the time being. For a while it will be dark for you because you yourself are still dark. Later, when the Divine Spark within you kindles into a mighty flame, it will illuminate the space around you. Then your way will be bright, for you yourself will have become light. There is no sun there such as on earth; there each must himself become a sun!

II. Principles

You have therefore resolved irrevocably to enter the Path — to enter it at once, beginning today, and to enter it not by halves but completely. When you said this to yourself seriously and firmly, you immediately felt, deep within your soul, as though a great burden had fallen from your shoulders; you felt a foretaste of the liberation awaiting you at the end of the Path. But at the same time you felt something like holy fear, akin to what one feels in the presence of death. It is not fear of what is to come, but a sense that it will be something great, something of extraordinary importance, something you have never before undergone. Let this holy reverence for the unknown and the great that awaits you upon the Path be a sign that you have already matured. Had you not yet matured, you would approach the gate of the Path not with holy reverence, not with awe, but with the self-assurance of the conceited. Cherish this feeling of reverence and develop it carefully within yourself, for later from it one of the mightiest faculties will unfold.

You are to prepare a worthy dwelling for your higher self; therefore you must cultivate within yourself kinds of feeling quite different from those you have known until now. Feelings of bitterness, sadness, dejection, jealousy, dissatisfaction, as well as pride, self-confidence, and ambition, would all make too poor a dwelling for the Divine Spark that is to inhabit your bodies. You would not go far upon the Path if you wished to travel it only intellectually, without developing and cultivating the appropriate feelings. Therefore read what you find here in such a way that you not only understand and digest it in thought, but also feel it as vividly as possible. Do not suppose that self-mastery means destroying in yourself every capacity for feeling. That would make the soul barren and impoverished, whereas you are to enrich and educate it. Such dryness of heart could belong only to one who wished to force his way onto the Path before being mature enough for it.

You should now acquaint yourself with the principles on which the Path is based. They are everywhere and always the same, because they lead to the same goal. The principle of every school is instruction; and though the teaching differs in every class, every class has pupils and teachers. A similar principle is that only one who has previously been a pupil can be a teacher. Your Master upon the Path was once himself a pupil such as you are today. A teacher who wished to give directions to others without first having passed through the school himself would be a false teacher. There are no self-taught masters here, for a self-taught person would create a personal system, without value for others and perhaps even harmful to them. Do not imagine, therefore, that your Master will give you anything personal, instil in you any personal opinions, or hand you something from His own experiences. He will only lead you and indicate the road; you must walk it yourself.

The Master will give you nothing ready-made and will do nothing in your stead. He will show you only how something may be done, provide the condi-

tions, and help you disentangle yourself from mistakes, but He will add neither strength nor knowledge nor even encouragement. You yourself must will; you yourself must always summon the desire and strength from within. If you do not understand something, He will not explain it to you; He will only place you in circumstances in which you can find the explanation yourself, if you sincerely desire and seek it. To give someone something ready-made would not be help; it would merely be alms. Learn this too from the Master. You will not help anyone by giving him something, whether material or spiritual; you will give true help only when you help him to help himself.

Therefore do not expect to see the Master in a physical body, for contact with Him is gained not through personal acquaintance but by growing spiritually to His level. "You can establish contact with the guru (Master) only by rising to the spiritual plane on which the Masters dwell, not by attempting to draw them down to our (earthly) plane. Never expect to see any of them, but always be ready to answer when they speak to you. A lay chela (pupil) is still nothing more than a man living in the world who sincerely desires illumination in spiritual matters. He has merely crossed the boundary line separating him from the Masters. He has, as it were, drawn their attention to himself. He works, and the Masters observe him. Whether he sees the Master or not has no bearing upon the results of his work; his good thoughts, words, and deeds will bear fruit just as surely as the bad." (B.)

Here again you meet Sanskrit words, but you must make your peace with them. "Guru" means teacher, that is, a Master who has a pupil in His care and leads him along the Path. "Chela" (Polish spelling: *czela*) contains, as the author notes, the same root as the Polish words *czeladź* and *czeladnik* ("journeyman"), and denotes a pupil who has already completed the probationary period. Before that period he is still a layman, a probationary journeyman, a pupil. From these names alone you may infer that a preparatory period, a period of probation, leads to the Path. There is something here resembling the old organisation of the crafts. Whoever wished to become a craftsman first entered upon instruction, apprenticeship, a term of training. He was then a pupil and had as yet no right to perform work independently. He was only to "serve," to become familiar with the tools and the craft. The master craftsman observed him and, if he judged him fit, admitted him to his workshop as a probationary journeyman. Only when the pupil proved capable there too could he be released as an independent journeyman and finally become a master. These customs of the crafts were modelled on the conditions of the ancient secret schools and even borrowed from them such terms as the Polish *czeladź*. If you realise this, you will come closer to understanding the principles of the secret schools.

The old crafts took their principles for training journeymen from the principles of the secret schools. Indeed, every craft was once itself a kind of "secret knowledge." Many a master craftsman possessed professional secrets at which he had arrived through years of perfecting himself in his craft, and therefore had to choose his pupils conscientiously, so as to have trustworthy men who would not disclose his secrets outside. It is the same to this day in the secret schools. Here too the pupil must undertake certain obligations, certain vows, not to betray the secrets. Do not suppose, however, that such "betrayal of secrets" can consist in revealing them to some outsider. There are no such secrets here; there are only things which an outsider, being unprepared, would

understand falsely because he is not yet mature enough to understand them properly. Tell the first person you meet today that you are working to prepare a dwelling within yourself for the Divine Spark, and he will either not understand you at all or will understand you wrongly. That is already the first of your secrets, and you can easily see that you cannot "betray" it to anyone. It will be the same with the other secrets you come to know upon the Path.

When the pupil has met the requirements of probation, he may enter the "temple of higher knowledge." "What he must now do is sometimes represented as an oath that he is to take, pledging himself not to betray any of the secret teachings. But the words 'oath' and 'betray' are inappropriate and at first misleading. What is involved is not an oath in the ordinary sense. Rather, at this stage a certain experience is acquired. One learns how secret knowledge is to be applied and how it is to be used in the service of humanity. One only now begins to understand humanity in the right way. It is not a matter of 'keeping silent' about higher truths, but rather of representing them in the appropriate manner and with suitable tact. This valuable quality is acquired with regard to many things about which one formerly spoke, and especially with regard to the manner in which one spoke. A poor initiate would be one who did not place the secrets he had acquired at the service of the world as far as possible. There is no obstacle to communicating knowledge in this field except the incomprehension of the recipient. In any case, higher secrets are not suitable for loose chatter. Yet no one who has attained the prescribed degree of development is 'forbidden' to speak of them. No other person imposes any 'oath' upon him in this respect. He takes everything upon his own responsibility; he himself must find within himself the decision how and when he is to act. And the 'oath' signifies nothing more than that he has been recognised as qualified to bear such responsibility." (C. 117.)

You now understand what these oaths and secrets in the secret schools consist in. Do not expect, therefore, that you will ever take oaths or vows before anyone. It is the same with your own obligation when you enter upon your "term" as an occult pupil.

You bind yourself to nothing before any other person, only before yourself. And if such an obligation is less important and less sacred to you than one made in the presence of someone else, you are not yet mature enough for the Path. You will now understand more clearly what Blavatsky says of this obligation (B. 962): "If a man mature for illumination wishes to be accepted by a Master as a chela, he must keep in mind the compact with the Master, whether tacitly or formally made, and never forget that this obligation is sacred. It concerns a seven-year period of probation. If during this time the pupil remains faithful to the Master through all temptations ... he may be initiated into [...] and henceforth communicate directly with his Guru. It depends upon the Master's judgment whether during the period of probation the chela, despite his faults and sins, is to receive signs or directions. The Guru, knowing the causes and motives that impel the candidate to sin, alone is entitled to judge whether the future chela should be encouraged.... The first indispensable condition, therefore, is that throughout the probationary period the pupil remain devoted and faithful to the Master.... The more often the magnetic link between the two is broken, the more difficult it is to establish it again; one cannot therefore demand that the Masters waste their strength in renewing contact with someone whose future course of life and ultimate falling

away they foresee. Yet how many of those who expect in advance proofs of special distinction without fulfilling these requirements make this a reproach against the Masters instead of recognising their own faults! They break the connection ten times a year and expect it to repair itself again. To those who are dissatisfied although no one has promised them anything, I would say: Have you fulfilled your duties and promises? You who accuse the Masters, those embodiments of mercy, patience, justice, and love, of not favouring you sufficiently — have you lived a holy life and fulfilled the conditions you imposed upon yourselves? He alone who can say with a pure heart and conscience that he has never committed a serious fault, never doubted the wisdom of the Master, never in his impatience to acquire occult powers sought foreign guidance, never failed in his duties either in thought or in conduct — he alone might accuse others rather than himself.... Without doubt many are called, but few are chosen; only a few have the patience to persevere to the end, for simple perseverance and singleness of aim are distasteful to the others."

From these bitter words of Blavatsky, herself a chela, you may learn a very great deal. She addressed them to those who, not yet mature enough for the Path, nevertheless considered themselves in their conceit entitled to probation as chelas.

Remember this well, for during those long seven years of probation it may happen more than once that you fall, become discouraged, and abandon the Path, and later say that the Masters evidently do not exist since they have given you no sign of themselves.

Prepare yourself for spending at least seven years in apprenticeship as a probationary pupil. If after those seven years of preparation you are still not sufficiently prepared, you must begin another seven years of probation, or else fall away from the Path and return to the broad road of the world. The principle of every secret school, ancient or modern, is the same. First comes a seven-year period of probation, or "preparation." If this probation is completed satisfactorily, a second seven-year period follows, the period of "illumination." During it the pupil who has successfully passed probation learns what he must acquire as a journeyman. Only afterwards may he attain "initiation," become an accepted journeyman, and work together with the Masters. Each seven-year period may be doubled or even tripled if it does not end successfully. Three failures to pass probation, however, decisively exclude the pupil from the secret school. He must then postpone re-entry until a subsequent incarnation. Why these periods consist of seven years rather than, for example, four or ten, you will understand when you recall that human life likewise consists of seven-year periods. During the first seven years a man builds his physical body, during the second seven his etheric body, during the third his astral body, during the fourth his mental body. Only in the twenty-ninth year of life is the lower self of man already "complete." Yet these bodies, once built, are fundamentally changed again every seven years, or rather may be changed. After seven years not a single particle remains the same in the body, and it depends upon man's will whether he builds in the place of the former particles new ones like them or different and better ones. The journeyman is to rebuild his bodies from the foundations, to replace all their particles with new and nobler ones. For this he requires seven years, because in a shorter time he cannot complete the rebuilding. If he does not finish the work in seven years, he must extend it into the next period.

You will now cease to be astonished that "preparation" alone requires at least seven full years. Until now you may have imagined yourself "already" prepared merely because you feel the desire to enter the Path, because you wander and seek. You have only just desired to begin preparation. Do not therefore expect that immediately, today, you will feel the Master near you or see signs of His presence and care. During those seven years you are first to prove yourself worthy of such care. But do not doubt that even in those years of preparation you will certainly find manifestations of His care if only you deserve them. You will find exactly as many, and exactly such, as you deserve.

They will of course not be letters from the Master miraculously discovered in your tightly closed room, nor books appearing in your possession from nowhere. Apparently nothing miraculous will happen, nothing of which you could boast before your fellow men as proof that the Master has singled you out. Yet if you learn to observe the events of your life attentively and connect them into a chain of causes and effects, you will unmistakably notice that something is nevertheless taking place which did not happen to you before. You will begin, apparently by chance, to meet people who are by no means Masters themselves, but are instruments in Their hands — blind and wholly unconscious instruments. Such people will tell you something they heard from a third person or bring you a book useless to themselves. They will always bring precisely what you need and what you are capable of using. Remember that all these are directions from your Master, which you need only select properly from the useless remainder and apply to the purposes of your preparation.

You will learn from the later chapters of this book exactly what preparation consists in. Here, merely remind yourself once more that preparation must be different today, in the twentieth century, from what it was in the first centuries of Christianity, and still more different from preparation in Egyptian or Indian times. You were born already possessing many qualities which people of those ages had first laboriously to develop within themselves. On the other hand, you are to develop qualities with which people will not be born for thousands of years to come! You are to outrun the course of natural evolution and stand at the forefront of humanity as a guide to its progress. Remember also that what matters here is the preparation of your invisible bodies, for it is in them that your higher self is to dwell. Therefore do not look in the following pages of this book for hygienic prescriptions, still less for gymnastic ones, even if only for breathing gymnastics. Such prescriptions you could find in hatha-yoga, but for you they are superfluous.

When, after the years of preparation, you have successfully completed the "probation," you will belong to those few who after the first seven-year period have attained illumination. This second period is incomparably more serious than the first, but perhaps easier in that at every step the ground no longer threatens to give way beneath your feet, for you will already have learned to stand firmly upon the steep slope. Instead you will continually encounter various unexpected traps and snares, ever new and ever different. Of course neither your Master nor anyone else will set them for you; you yourself will set them. At the stage of illumination you will gradually attain ever greater knowledge and power, and for your lower self, for your conceit and egoism, this will be a dangerous temptation to regard yourself as omniscient and omnipotent.

If this pride seduces you, you will cease to follow in the footsteps of the Master and will wish to follow a path of your own. Each time this will lead you into wastelands from which the return is sad and difficult.

During illumination you are to pass through the second of three successive "halls," corresponding to the three Sanskrit *gunas*: tamas, rajas, and sattva, and to the three Rosicrucian powers: Ahriman, Lucifer, and Christ. Of these halls *The Voice of the Silence* says (D. 13): "Three Halls, O weary wanderer, will lead thee to the end of toil. Three Halls, O conqueror of Mara, will conduct thee through the three states of consciousness (jagrat, svapna, sushupti) to the fourth (turiya), and thence into the seven worlds, the worlds of Eternal Rest. If thou wouldst learn their names, then hearken and remember: The name of the first Hall is Avidya. It is the Hall in which thou sawest the light of day; in it thou livest and in it thou shalt die.

"The name of the second is the Hall of Learning. In it thy soul finds the blossoms of life, but beneath every blossom lurks a serpent.

"The name of the third is the Hall of Wisdom, beyond which stretch the shoreless waters of Akshara, the indestructible fountain of Omniscience.

"Wouldst thou safely cross the first Hall, let not thy mind mistake the fires of desire burning therein for the sunlight of thy life.

"Wouldst thou pass happily through the second, stop not to breathe the intoxicating fragrance of its flowers. Wouldst thou be free from the fetters of karma, seek not thy Guru in these regions of delirium. The Wise dwell not in these pleasure-gardens of the senses; they heed not the alluring calls of delusion. Him who shall help thee to rebirth seek in the Hall of Wisdom, in the halls lying beyond, where there are no shadows and the light of truth shines with never-diminishing splendour....

"Wouldst thou through the Hall of Wisdom reach the valley of bliss, close, O disciple, thy senses against the fearful frenzy of thy ahamkara,[*)] which robs thee of peace."

You probably know that *The Voice of the Silence* is a fragment of the *Book of the Golden Precepts*, said to have existed in India from time immemorial and to derive from Aryasanga; its archaic tone will therefore not surprise you. You also know that since those Indian times we have advanced far in development, so you will be able to interpret its contents accordingly, and especially the last of the passages quoted. The Indians still had to "close the senses against the frenzy of ahamkara" in order to reach the "valley of bliss" (nirvana); today, however, our task is different. We are no longer permitted to flee into the valley of bliss, for our tasks are to be sought upon this earth. It would likewise be wrong to "close the senses" in order to gain peace, for you are to master the senses, not close them. You will learn this, in fact, upon the fifth step of the Path.

Your ahamkara is no longer an obstacle today, but an aid, because thanks to this tendency toward individual life you can be of any use to your fellow men. Without it you would be merely an unproductive member of society, a burden upon it.

The first Hall is the earthly, physical plane. Over it reigns avidya (ignorance, tamas, Ahriman), but you are already beginning to rise above it since you seek access to the Path. The "fires of desire" are no longer the "sunlight of your life";

[*)] The craving for personal, bodily life not united with God.

you are no longer guided by cravings and impulses because you do not wish to be their slave, but their master.

In the second Hall you will find the "blossoms of life." This is the astral plane, extraordinarily rich in forms. But beneath the flowers lurks the serpent (rajas, Lucifer), which is why Eliphas Levi calls the astral plane the "great serpent." There you would soon find a teacher, but he would be a false Guru. In these "regions of delirium" masters are found only by sorcerers or by unconscious spiritists. It is only the Hall of Learning; you are to recognise its deceptive and beautiful illusions, but not remain there.

Only in the third Hall can you find your Master, for the mental plane is the lowest of the regions in which He acts. Until you reach that Hall, therefore, do not expect to see Him or receive any direct message from Him. Only above that Hall springs the "unfailing fountain of omniscience" (akshara, intuition); only there shines the light of unveiled truth. Until now you reached the Hall of Wisdom only in deepest sleep (sushupti), from which you retained no memories upon awakening into daytime consciousness (jagrat). On the Path you will learn to bring into consciousness the inspirations gained upon the mental plane, just as in the waking state you will learn to become aware of the imaginations of the astral world which until now you remembered only fragmentarily from the dreams of light sleep (svapna). Having passed through these highest steps of the Path, you will reach the "fourth state of consciousness" (turiya), which for the ancient Indians was accessible only in trance (samadhi), but which will be accessible to you at any moment, while awake, without loss of consciousness or memory. By then, however, you will already be a journeyman, and the road to that point is still long.

Those three halls mentioned in *The Voice of the Silence* are now beginning to connect in your mind with the three stages upon which entrance to the Path depends. Preparation takes place upon the physical plane; there you are to acquire everything that can be acquired upon it, so that you may enter the Hall of Learning. There you will gradually pass through an "illumination" entirely different from what could be obtained through the physical senses. Your astral senses will begin to open; you will gradually enter that plane of the "great illusion"[*)](Mara), where the "king of Mara" rules, wearing in his crown a jewel of such brilliance that mortals are blinded by it.

Perhaps you know the beautiful legend of Lucifer, who, when cast down from heaven, lost from his crown the jewel from which the vessel that preserves the Holy Grail later arose. It is more than a symbol, and later you will understand it.

You will also understand that Lucifer is not Satan nor any dark power at all, but, in accordance with his name, the "Light-bearer," to whom humanity owes much that is good and beautiful. He is a tremendous power, but not an evil one; yet he can lead men astray if they submit to him. You, however, will learn to make use of him as a mighty means without mistaking the means for the goal. You will not be his slave, but the one who directs him.

[*)]From the astral plane come the "guardian spirits" of spiritists, shamans, dervishes, and fakirs.

III. Secret Schools

You already know what kind of "secrets" await you upon the Path and why you cannot "betray" them. You also know that the goal of the Path has remained the same from time immemorial and will remain the same until the end of the earthly manvantara. The means leading to that goal, however, change according to the stage which humanity successively reaches in its development. For this reason the systems of the secret schools have differed in different periods.

If these schools bore the name "secret," it will now be clear to you why. They were not secret in themselves and did not conceal their existence, for they had no need to do so. If an unqualified person had forced his way into one, he would have found nothing improper, nothing contrary to religion, the state, or humanity. He would merely have found things incomprehensible to him, inaccessible at his intellectual level, and thus secret only for him. If, on the other hand, these schools were situated in inaccessible regions unknown to anyone outside them, the reason was entirely different from a desire to preserve secrecy. Their purpose, as today, was to educate the astral and mental bodies, and for this suitable external conditions were necessary.

Even an ordinary school today, whether an elementary school or a university, cannot be situated in a noisy, restless, bustling place without disturbing study. Still greater quiet and seclusion are required by schools in which astral or mental organs are to function, where therefore the mere presence of an average person would already constitute a serious disturbance. Here lies the true reason for the seclusion into which the secret schools withdrew and still withdraw.

Yet even this inaccessibility changes with progress. Do not think that today you would have to travel to Tibet or Greenland in order to enter a secret school. We have now learned to master external conditions far better than was possible centuries ago. Ancient Indian schools were indeed situated not only in the depths of temples to which no outsider had access, but the temples themselves were built on islands in broad lakes, in impenetrable forests, among inaccessible rocks, or finally underground. The Egyptians placed them in their pyramids and in other solitary structures whose purpose is still not fully known to most people. You know that the early Christians gathered in catacombs and underground caves not only for prayer. In the Middle Ages monasteries provided suitable shelter for secret schools. Modern schools have no such separate shelters, nor do they need them. They may exist everywhere and nowhere. Later you will understand why. You probably know the *Bhagavad-Gita* and know that it names five paths of yoga: Sankhya-yoga, Karma-yoga, Jnana-yoga, Karma-sannyasa-yoga, and Atma-samyama-yoga.

If you wish to make up the full seven rays of the Logos, you might add Hatha-yoga and Raja-yoga, but that would be only a "mask." In place of Hatha-yoga put rather Bhakti-yoga, for this corresponds most closely to the path followed, for example, by the majority of Christian Saints. Hatha-yoga does not belong at all to the seven original Indian paths and arose only much later, when under Tantric influence Indian philosophy began to acquire an increasingly materialistic colouring. Leaving Hatha-yoga aside, then, each of these paths led to the union of the higher self with the lower, that is, precisely to yoga. None of them, however, was so comprehensive or gave so complete a development of all the higher faculties of man as Raja-yoga. Bhakti-yoga, for example, which is also known in the West, gave the individual as much as Raja-yoga, but it led him, as it were, beyond the line of his earthly development. Modern humanity, however, needs perfect leaders who can be prototypes of its further progress; hence today even Raja-yoga would be insufficient if it remained in its original form. Modern schools have therefore retained only its general skeleton and filled it with material adapted to the present level of development.

Until now, perhaps without being conscious of it, you have followed the path of Karma-yoga, and you will continue along it, but now with full awareness. It is a path requiring no secret schools, and is therefore accessible to everyone, in any circumstances of life, without special instruction or preparation. It requires only good will, nothing more. Study Vivekananda's little book *Karma-Yoga* in order to see how far you are already travelling on this path. Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* is a union of Bhakti-yoga and Karma-yoga. Jnana-yoga proceeds chiefly in a philosophical and scientific direction and was therefore always the path of educated priests. You can learn about the other paths from special works, and likewise about the details of ancient Raja-yoga. You do not need those details here; it will be more useful to know the most general principles of initiation in various epochs.

You already know that initiation was preceded by illumination after suitable preparation, and that only after initiation could a pupil be accepted as a journeyman. During illumination he acquired the faculty of making observations with supersensible organs, while initiation itself was a test of those faculties, a kind of examination. The priest initiating the candidate used magnetic passes to put him into a state of sleep resembling deep modern trance and therefore approaching death. The pupil remained in this state of apparent death for three days and four nights; this was the "mystical death" of which people speak all the more, the less they know about it. During those three and a half days the fire of kundalini passed through its three and a half coils over the seven steps and reached the "Opening of Brahma."

In other words, the pupil, in his astral body, withdrew from the physical body and stood face to face with the powers of the astral world. If well prepared, he had to stand before them without fear and without losing mental equilibrium. For the first time he stood alone in the darkness, without the help and protection of his Guru, still less of any third person. When he had passed this test successfully, he was brought back to consciousness by magnetic passes, and afterwards taught to enter that state of trance by himself and to awaken from it by himself.

After this initiation the journeyman received the Sanskrit name *parivrajaka* (wanderer), or the Pali *sotapatti* (one who has entered the stream). From that moment he was a wanderer, for he no longer had a fixed homeland on earth but travelled through invisible worlds. Various "bonds" or "fetters" still connected him with the earth, but he could cast them off only gradually. First he threw off three fetters: the illusion of the personal "I," then "doubt," and finally "superstitions." Later you will learn what these fetters consist in; here merely remember that casting them off often required several successive incarnations, so closely were they bound up with man's nature. They are all the harder to cast off now, in our age of materialism and highly developed lower individuality.

Only after casting off these three fetters could he enter the next stage of journeymanship, that is, receive the second initiation. After this second initiation he received the Sanskrit name *kutichaka* (hut-builder), or the Pali *sakridagamin* (one who is to be born only once more). Having traversed the astral plane, he established his dwelling on the mental plane and built himself a home there. Here he received a new "key of knowledge," for he had already received one after the first initiation: then it was knowledge of the astral world, now also of the mental. Either in the same incarnation or only in the next, the journeyman reached the third initiation, which made him a "swan" (a rider of Hamsa) among the Indians, or an *anagamin* (one who will no longer incarnate) among the Buddhists. Here he cast off the fourth and fifth fetters: desire for anything whatsoever for himself, and also the bonds of sympathy and antipathy. He then attained the fourth and final initiation, after which he became a *paramahamsa* (one standing beyond the "I") among the Indians, or an *arhat* (the worthy one) among the Buddhists. He cast off the last fetters: every inclination toward life in any form, and finally even toward formless life. This casting off of ahamkara severed the last link binding him to individual life; after it the "drop returned to the ocean," the initiate disappeared from the world and sank into nirvana.

That was the final goal of ancient Indian Raja-yoga.

You know the distorted conceptions of nirvana held by materialistic minds in the West. For them, since they regard only their lower bodies as their "I," existence without those bodies is naturally equivalent to non-existence. But for you, who unmistakably feel your higher self and are to unite with it, such existence without forms (arupa) is not annihilation but, on the contrary, universal existence. Nirvana for you, therefore, is not the end of existence but its expansion and enrichment. But here we are concerned with the stages of the Path. For the Indians the final stage was to cast off the bonds connecting the Divine Spark with the lower bodies, so that it might abandon them and return to its Primal Source. In those ancient times this was natural, because the Spark had dwelt in bodily coverings for a comparatively short time. It felt foreign in them, and longing drew it back toward its homeland, arupa. Since those times, however, we have advanced enormously in evolution. Christ did not descend to earth in order to take our souls away from it, but to show them the possibility of developing upon it. Our task does not consist in fleeing from the earth, but in making use of every opportunity it offers for our development. The Indians were like little children who are at school for the first time and would like to run home. We are already older pupils who understand that

it would be pointless to escape from school, and who therefore remain there willingly in order to learn as much as possible.

The souls of the Indians still retained, as it were, a living memory of their blissful existence on the arupa planes without the bodily coverings that constrained them and weighed upon them unbearably. Their secret schools therefore employed methods intended to re-establish as quickly as possible contact with those planes, the homeland of the higher self, so that union with it might be achieved. In later periods human souls became reconciled to their fate and began to take ever more interest in their bodily coverings and surroundings. The Chaldeans, for example, retained from the ancient faculties only the ability to feel the influence of heavenly bodies upon their organism; hence astrology arose among them, regarded today in the West as a superstition, although as late as the time of Kepler it formed an inseparable unity with astronomy. Chaldean secret schools were therefore already more material than the Indian ones, for besides the pupils' work upon themselves they included what we today call the exact sciences. A Chaldean initiate was not only a yogi or saint, but also a scholar possessing extensive rational knowledge, whereas among the Indians an initiate could convey certain information drawn directly from the arupa worlds only while immersed in the state of turiya — not reasoned conclusions, therefore, but ready-made revelations.

You know that Egyptian materialism went still further, revealing itself even in the embalming of corpses and the placing around them of objects of everyday use. In their secret schools there remained only the tradition of the ancient connection of man with the arupa world; hence their Initiates possessed a certain mood of resignation. Isis had already been separated from Osiris, and they did not know how to restore the connection between them. Thus the level of initiation among them was, so to speak, lowered. The secret school could not enable the journeyman's still young and weak individuality to stand on its own feet, and therefore led him only to reading other people's thoughts in turiya, without being able to develop independent thought within him. It was something like present-day telepathy, and you will understand the relation more clearly if you realise that our present epoch is a repetition of the Egyptian one, though of course as its opposite pole.

The times immediately preceding the descent of Christ marked a still deeper descent of spirit into matter, but at the same time the awakening of the individual soul. Thus in Greece and Phoenicia there were no longer secret schools in the proper sense. There were instead mysteries and philosophical schools. Teaching in them was already entirely rational, while the mysteries had the task of rendering perceptible through dramatic representations what could not yet be expressed in the exact words of instruction. Christianity alone restored the secret schools to a level as high as the original one, but enriched by the entire spiritual heritage that Christ gave humanity. Only from the time of Christ was the connection between the lower and higher worlds re-established, and it was re-established in a new, strictly individual way. Thanks to the sacrifice of Christ, people no longer need flee the earth or sink into the "sleep of the yogis" in order to commune with higher worlds; they can establish contact with those worlds here, upon earth. This is what the "Communion of Saints" means, something you may not previously have understood in the catechism.

You are beginning to understand why today there are no secret schools like those of old, and why they may be "everywhere and nowhere." Quite simply, there is no need for such separate schools. Christ showed a way that every human being without exception can follow, however difficult his circumstances in life and however unfavourable they may be to any work upon himself. There is no situation in life in which a person cannot rise even to those heavenly worlds in which he will find Christ. Anyone can do this if only he truly wills it. The extraordinary importance of the little book I mentioned to you, *The Imitation of Christ*, will now be clear, and it will not seem strange to you that today even Indians study it. Nor will you any longer be confused by claims, perhaps heard here and there, of the supposed superiority of the Buddhist religion over that of Christ.

Consider that Christ descended to earth only six centuries after the time of Buddha, and that humanity was therefore already six centuries older. It had advanced by six centuries in development and consequently needed something more than Buddha could give it. That "something more" was precisely what Christ gave to humanity. He said briefly: "I am the way, the truth, and the life"; in these few words He showed humanity the way into the higher worlds — through Himself.

You are probably no longer confused by the fact that at one moment I speak of higher worlds and at another of the higher self; for you know that the higher worlds in which it dwells already belong to the arupa planes. On those planes there are no forms, no boundaries, no separateness. There your Divine Spark and Christ are one. When you establish a permanent connection between your lower and higher self, you will at the same time establish a connection between yourself and Christ. That is modern yoga, differing not by a hair's breadth from ancient yoga if you remember that nirvana is Christ. Fix this in your memory, and no contrary assertions of supposed yogis or occultists will lead you astray.

It will now be clear to you that modern yoga needs no secret schools! Your secret school is precisely here, in the place where you sit. It is formed by the two of you: yourself and your Master, still unknown to you but already present. Nevertheless you will still find secret schools today scattered in various places in Europe, Asia, and America. Some of them truly practise yoga; others are calculated to exploit the ignorance of their pupils or even their vanity. The more genuine among them follow either an Indian or an Egyptian line; some have produced strange compilations of hatha-yoga and Kabbalah. There are also those calling themselves Hermetic or Rosicrucian while having nothing in common with those currents except the name.

All this, however, is unnecessary for you. A true secret school consists not in a place or a building, but in work. The question is not where one is, or whether one finds oneself in some peculiar environment; the question is work. And you can undertake that work at any moment and in any place. Even in public schools there are external candidates who come to the school only for the examination after completing their studies. In the same way, you will need a secret school only when you are ready for the examination. In due time — but not before — you will learn where you are to go for that examination. Do not inquire about it prematurely, for no one will tell you anything true. At the

proper time you will receive directions concerning your school, and you too will tell no one anything about it. You will not even reveal that you know anything real about it. Until then let it remain a myth for you.

The school, therefore, will become an actual matter for you when you begin to approach initiation.

At the appropriate moment you will come into contact with people who will tell you something about it. There will be nothing extraordinary or mysterious in this, yet it will be true. By then you will already be so far advanced on the Path that you will immediately perceive how true what they tell you is. For the present do not trouble yourself about it, but devote yourself to work upon yourself with all the patience and perseverance of which you are capable. Later you will see that the Path requires much more of both than you possess today. One of your constant tasks will be to develop these capacities in ever greater measure.

For now you need only rid yourself of the prejudice that any true school could lead to something different from another. Just as the seven different paths of ancient Indian yoga were merely seven coloured lights of one sunbeam refracted in the prism of the earthly plane, so the different modern schools are only tributaries of one great river. A Rosicrucian school, for example, is therefore in no essential respect different from a Christian, Adyar, Scottish, Hermetic, or other school, provided it is genuine. Whether it is genuine you will know infallibly, at the appropriate stage of the Path, by characteristics that will then become intelligible to you.

Remember also from the very threshold of the Path that *The Voice of the Silence* truly warns you not to "seek the Guru in the regions of delirium." One who calls himself an "Initiate" is certainly no Initiate, unless by that name you mean an adept of hatha-yoga. A true Initiate uses no titles and outwardly differs in no way from an average person. You may spend years in intimate acquaintance with him and never learn from him even that he is an Initiate. You must first become his equal in order to know who he is — or rather, to recognise him for what he is. Among Initiates there is no need to make one another's acquaintance, introduce themselves to one another, still less exchange secret words or signs. There each sees at once what the other is; indeed, they have long known one another on the higher planes, so mistakes or doubts are impossible.

This seeing of other Initiates, this conscious connection with them in supersensible bodies, has been possible for man only since the time of Christ. For that reason, from that time onward secret schools in the older sense have no longer been necessary. The pupil's continual physical presence near the Master has become superfluous. Only since then has "self-initiation" been possible. Paracelsus is regarded as the first "self-initiated" person[*)]. He initiated himself only in the sense that he had no Master in a physical body; but you will easily understand that he must have had one in an astral or mental body.

Christian Saints and Rosicrucians likewise, for the most part, did not undergo training in secret schools before their initiation.

[*)] Interested readers are referred to the booklet on the life and ideas of Paracelsus, available from the administration of "Lotos." (Publisher's note.)

In the next chapter you will read about the preparatory stages and the stages of illumination. You will see there that exercises at those stages require no separate school. And if in Christian esotericism you encounter terms such as *concentratio*, *meditatio*, or *contemplatio*, you will merely have evidence that occult exercises were not unknown to medieval monasteries. Similarly, among the Rosicrucians you will find terms which later even passed into secular science, where their original meaning was distorted under the influence of the materialistic tendency of that science. Consider only the meaning in which the expressions imagination, inspiration, and intuition are used today. Someone is said to "imagine things" when he pictures something nonexistent and therefore suffers delusions or hallucinations. People today not infrequently seek inspiration in alcohol or narcotics. And they speak of intuition even when they have an "intuitive" aversion to certain foods, or "intuitively" recite prayers while thinking about something else.

Nothing I have said implies that Rosicrucian, Christian, Buddhist, or other secret schools do not exist today. They still exist, but the necessity of being physically present in them has ceased. If it does not in any way conflict with your duties or your task in life, you may enter such a school. Do not expect, however, to find advertisements for one anywhere or to have it recommended by an acquaintance. When such a school becomes necessary for you, your Master will point it out, although until now you may not even suspect His existence.

Schools that advertise publicly and charge for instruction are certainly false.

IV. The Path

Now that you have learned to judge properly the differences between ancient Indian and modern yoga, you will also be able to accept that the stages of this yoga must correspond to our present level of development, even though their ancient names are retained. Keep the Sanskrit names, if only because neither Polish nor any other European language possesses words that characterise as briefly and precisely what the Sanskrit terms contain.

You will encounter these names in all kinds of European compilations and plagiarisms, usually all the more uncritically because hatha-yoga uses the same names as raja-yoga although they mean something quite different there. They are: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi. You probably know that these stages must not be confused with the eight steps of the Buddhist "Noble Eightfold Path." Later you will see that the entire Eightfold Path is only one of the stages of yoga.

Already at the first stage you will notice how greatly it differs today from the corresponding stage of ancient Indian raja-yoga. Yama literally means "restraint," and is therefore a passive purification. Here you are not to build any new qualities into your bodies, but merely to refrain from falling into your former errors. Among the Indians yama comprised "five commandments": do not kill, do not lie, do not steal, live in moderation, and accept no gifts! From this alone you can see how far we have developed since the time of ancient raja-yoga. For us today each of these commandments, with the possible exception of the fifth, is so self-evident that it would really be superfluous to enumerate them. Later, however, you will see that even today these commandments have their justification when they are understood in accordance with our present level of development.

The second stage is niyama. Here the divergence between hatha-yoga and raja-yoga becomes very clear. The six prescriptions of hatha-yoga — basti, neti, laukiki, dhauti, trataka, and kapalabhati — consist mainly of physical practices whose significance is irrelevant to you. Raja-yoga likewise contains six rules, or *shat-sampatti*, but entirely different in content. Shankaracharya summed up this "sixfold qualification" under the following names: 1. shama, control of thoughts; 2. dama, control of actions; 3. uparati, accepting life as it is; 4. titiksha, patience in enduring unpleasantness; 5. shraddha, faith in the Guru and in oneself; 6. samadhana, inner equilibrium and singleness of aim.

As you see, this is already active work, for it is not limited to abstaining from sins but aims at building entirely new qualities into your etheric, astral, and mental bodies.

The third stage, asana, literally means posture of the body. In hatha-yoga, in keeping with its materialistic orientation, it is the first indispensable stage and an extraordinarily important one. It comprised a great number of

detailed rules for various bodily postures used in breathing and other exercises. Some of these asanas are very arduous (mudras) or simply perverse (vajroli). In raja-yoga, asana prescribed a free and natural bodily posture, with the sole condition that it could be maintained without fatigue during prolonged exercises in pratyahara and dharana. For Indians, for example, the "lotus posture" (padmasana) was convenient; for Europeans, however, unaccustomed to sitting cross-legged on the ground, it would be tiring.

Pranayama literally means restraint of breathing. It is the fourth stage; in hatha-yoga one of the most important, for by various breathing exercises it sought to kindle the fire of Kundalini and stimulate it to act upon the "lotus flowers" in the etheric body. Raja-yoga, on the other hand, obtained the development of these "flowers" by an entirely different route, namely through exercises of the etheric and astral bodies. The fire of Kundalini awoke of itself from its sleep when the lotus flowers were already functioning properly. Modern yoga follows the same line, replacing breathing exercises, which are directly dangerous to European organisms, with rhythm. Take care, therefore, that neither impatience nor the suggestions of false teachers tempt you into trying any breathing exercises whatsoever. You will find directions for exercises harmless to health in the proper place in this book; as for those taken from hatha-yoga, remember that all of them must be carried through to the end if they are not to become dangerous to the lungs and brain. You would not be mature for the Path if you could not resist temptations to experiment with hatha-yoga; know, then, that such temptations, especially from hatha-yogis on the astral plane, will assail you frequently and with ever-increasing force. Your impatience and conceit will always be the best nourishment for them. In the future you will often think that "after all, you are already quite far" upon the Path and therefore ought by now to perceive some signs of the activity of your lotuses; and since you do not see them, "the way you have chosen is evidently too slow, or perhaps does not lead to the goal at all." Such will be the temptations to try other roads.

The fifth stage, pratyahara, is the last indispensable one in hatha-yoga, because it already includes mental exercises, which the hatha-yogi dislikes. In raja-yoga, however, it is one of the most indispensable stages and has remained equally indispensable to the present day.

Pratyahara is simply an exercise in attention. It aims to prevent attention from going wherever the strongest impressions summon it, and to make it depend entirely upon man's will, upon his free choice as to what he wishes to direct it toward. For example, you are reading this book and have fixed your whole attention upon the sentence you are now reading. Suddenly a noise arises nearby, or perhaps only the murmur of rain. Your attention immediately tears itself away from the book and turns toward the rustle or clatter. Your attention does not depend upon you but upon external impressions reaching your consciousness through the senses. Your task in pratyahara is precisely to master attention completely and wield it as an obedient instrument. You are to learn to fix attention where you wish, not where it runs of itself after an impression. When you read, your attention must not tear itself away from the book; it must not turn from it toward auditory or tactile impressions. If you direct attention toward one sense, for example sight, the other senses must remain silent; they must not be permitted to draw attention to themselves, still

less to split or divide it among several directions. When you have carried out such exercises successively with each of your senses, you will learn to control your attention as connections to different stations are controlled at a telephone exchange. At any moment a connection with one station can be broken and another established. A badly arranged exchange, however, would be one in which, during a conversation with one station, another were connected against the operator's will and interrupted the conversation already begun. Having acquired practice, you will also learn to disconnect all stations completely: to fix your attention on nothing and receive no impressions when you do not wish to receive them.

With these five stages ends what I previously called preparation. From this brief survey alone you can see how much serious work upon oneself is required merely to prepare for entrance upon the Path of illumination. All the exercises included in these five stages are only preparatory exercises for the actual occult exercises. All aim at bringing your bodies — the physical body and the invisible bodies alike — under the rule of your will, so as to transform them into reliable and efficient instruments for the exercises proper. You would obtain altogether false and caricatured results if you performed higher exercises with unsuitable instruments, instruments not obedient to your will but acting on their own account. Only the higher exercises will give you illumination; during the lower ones, illumination would be premature. It would even be something abnormal, comparable to forcing under-age children to perform work accessible only to adults. Do not suppose, however, that throughout the long seven years devoted to cultivating those five lower stages of yoga you will work continually in darkness and never perceive a single flash assuring you that you are on the right road and that your exercises are leading toward the intended results.

More than once, and most often at moments when you begin to lose confidence and hope, you will experience something that fills your soul with renewed courage. I shall speak more about such experiences later; I mention them here only so that you may know that although your road will be difficult and toilsome, because the Path is very steep, precisely because of its steepness each step will open before you vistas ever new and ever more magnificent.

The higher stages of raja-yoga now diverge completely from those of hatha-yoga, although the names remain the same. I shall therefore no longer mention hatha-yoga, for you will easily see for yourself how devoid of content such names as dharana, dhyana, and samadhi are in it. In raja-yoga, however, these terms retain the fullness of their meaning, and in modern yoga that meaning is naturally richer still. The sixth stage, and the first of the higher exercises, is dharana, corresponding to the European term concentration. Keeping attention fixed for a longer time upon a particular object already belonged to the tasks of pratyahara, for its purpose was that attention should not wander freely from impression to impression, but remain upon one chosen by you and not allow itself to be drawn away by incidental impressions. Pratyahara, however, is a rather passive exercise, for in the first place it limits itself to preventing attention from escaping your control. In everyday language it aims at making you no longer "scatterbrained." Dharana, on the other hand, requires active effort: having attention under your command, you are to keep it as long as you choose upon whatever object you choose. This focusing of

attention, this concentration, takes place upon a selected external object. It may also be a particular point of your body, a point in space, or even an image from memory. This is the preparatory degree for the next stage of your Path.

Dhyana corresponds in European terminology to meditation, or "reflection." Yet this is not to be reflection in the ordinary sense, a wandering of thought here and there, hesitation among various suppositions and possibilities. Nor is it to be syllogistic reasoning. The objects of exercises in dhyana are no longer material, sensory things but abstractions. All reflection on physical objects and their properties, even reflection on things apparently so non-physical as the plan of a new device or the working out of an idea for a poem or a painting, still belongs to dharana. Dhyana moves only among abstractions, among "abstract" concepts; its object can therefore be only something that exists first upon the arupa planes. If you reflect on a dog you have seen, on its appearance, colour, breed, and qualities, you practise dharana. But when as the object of your reflection you take not that particular dog known to your senses but the dog in general, as a species, as a type, only then is it dhyana.

You then meditate on the characteristics of the dog in general, on its qualities, its role in nature, its relation to man — in a word, on things that do not exist on the physical plane, although their effects are expressed there. Reflection on a recent good deed of your friend is still dharana, but meditation on goodness in general as a human quality is already dhyana. When through a series of exercises you have become proficient in both dharana and dhyana, you will notice a fundamental difference in the phenomena accompanying the two states. After prolonged dharana you will feel mental fatigue, just as after solving a not very difficult mathematical problem requiring many calculations, or after carefully reading the description of a machine or some household apparatus. After dhyana, by contrast, however long it has been practised, you will feel no fatigue at all; rather, increased efficiency and freshness of mind. And do you know why? In dhyana you encounter for the first time exercises in which you do not use the physical brain. Quite simply, you do not think with the brain, and therefore this physical organ of yours is not fatigued but rests throughout the whole period of meditation. Of course you will avoid fatigue only on condition that you have already acquired proficiency in pratyahara and dharana; in other words, that your attention knows how to remain where you fix it. If external impressions continually draw it aside, you must strain the mind to return it to its original direction, and those efforts will tire you.

You will often hear, and it will happen to you as well, that meditation induces drowsiness and even actual sleep. The cause may be the mental fatigue just mentioned, resulting from insufficient proficiency in pratyahara; or drowsiness may arise simply because during dhyana the brain-mind is completely inactive and therefore falls asleep. If, then, you have conscientiously trained yourself in pratyahara and dharana and nevertheless drowsiness or even sleep comes over you during dhyana, you have no cause for anxiety. In dhyana you do not think with the brain but with your mental body; even if you fall asleep, therefore, you continue your meditation in sleep, and it will be just as fruitful as if conducted while awake. Its value is not diminished by the fact that upon waking you remember nothing of it; for the time will come when you will be able to remember everything you experienced in sleep, and then you will also recall the content of the meditation. I do not mention another reason for falling

asleep during meditation, because it occurs only in people who are not yet mature enough for meditation at all. You will easily understand that a person who cannot yet think abstractly will fall asleep from boredom — not from fatigue — when forced to occupy his mind with an object wholly inaccessible to him, for he knows only how to use the physical brain, and the brain cannot meet the task.

The last of the stages about which you can still obtain any information from books is samadhi. In raja-yoga it is also called the "sleep of the yogis." You already know that the Indians were able to reach the arupa planes only in trance, which for them was the sole means of attaining the state of turiya. Among the ancient Indians only the most outstanding occult pupils were capable even of dhyana, because the faculty of abstract thought was not yet developed in those times. Everything you find in the old Indian books that rightly awakens your admiration by the extraordinary elevation of its themes came not from the minds of the people of those times, but from direct revelations obtained precisely in states of samadhi. The yogi in trance spoke, those around him wrote down his words without understanding them, but knowing that they were infallibly true. The yogi himself, after awakening, did not understand what he had said in samadhi, because his mind could not encompass it. It was accessible to him only in the state of turiya. Here you have another opportunity to measure the distance by which we have advanced in development since those times.

In dhyana the result of your meditation is an expansion of your knowledge of the subject you have chosen. By meditation you rise to the arupa plane, where there are no forms and no separateness. There your thoughts are the thoughts of other beings on that plane, and their thoughts are at the same time yours. From that plane you bring back thoughts not your own — in other words, inspirations. That is why meditation enriches your knowledge of a given subject, for besides what you yourself are able to know about it, you learn what others know about it as well. Try to experience in thought what you have just read here, and a conception of what "inspiration" is will begin to dawn upon you. The value of inspirations is in no way diminished by the fact that man receives them, as it were, from "outside" rather than from within himself. Indeed, you cannot maintain that these inspirations do not come from your higher self and therefore from yourself; and you cannot maintain this because that self dwells precisely on the arupa planes, where there is no separation or distinctness.

Such is the state of things in dhyana; and if you have understood it well, you will also be able to form a conception of the stage immediately above it, samadhi. I am speaking here of samadhi in modern yoga, for you know that in the ancient form it was a state of trance. In dhyana you unite with the thoughts of others about a given object; in samadhi you unite with the object itself. Quite simply, you become it. Try to make these words as clear to yourself as possible: you yourself become the object. You sink into it and immerse yourself in it; you become one with it. For that reason through samadhi you obtain the most perfect knowledge of a given object that can possibly be had, because you yourself are that object. In dhyana you obtained knowledge of it by becoming acquainted with thoughts about it other than your own.

Here, however, immersing yourself in samadhi, you know the object itself directly, not through thought. You feel yourself to be the object, live its life, receive its impressions, and pass through its experiences. This immersion, or "contemplation" in the terminology of European secret schools, leads directly to intuition. Remember, however, that the word "intuition" is usually used very incorrectly because few understand what it actually means. Very often intuition is identified with "instinct"; but you probably know that the former is a superconscious state and the latter a subconscious one. Intuition, therefore, is the opposite pole of instinct, not the same thing. Animals possess instinct and possess it as an innate property; intuition, on the other hand, can belong only to human beings, and only after they develop it through conscious efforts — or rather, rise to it through those efforts. There are people who seem to possess an intuitive capacity innately, but you know how to explain this. They developed it in previous lives, and therefore in the present incarnation they already possess it as something ready-made.

Contemplation, then, leads to the acquisition of intuition. The former is an activity, the latter its result. In ancient Indian raja-yoga the three highest stages — dharana, dhyana, and samadhi — were included under the common name *samyama*. Contemplation in the proper sense is therefore only samyama, for samadhi is merely the state in which the yogi could practise contemplation. Naturally, successful contemplation requires both dharana and dhyana, for without concentration and meditation it is impossible to attain contemplation and therefore the results afforded by intuition.

Do not imagine that dharana, dhyana, and samadhi are exclusively mental exercises. Just as one may concentrate thoughts and immerse oneself in them, one may concentrate upon feeling and immerse oneself in it. You will practise such exercises of meditation and concentration not only with the mental body but also with the etheric and astral bodies. They are equally important and equally indispensable, for purely mental exercises would lead only to one-sided development. You would develop only certain supersensible organs while leaving others dormant, and thus build an incomplete, crippled organism. According to the manner in which you practise a given meditation, you obtain different results and train different supersensible organs.

Meditations, therefore, are not merely theoretical exercises. Their results are immediately visible in the supersensible bodies, for they cause the lotuses, or lotus flowers in those bodies, to light up and move. Your Guru will perceive them and judge whether they are functioning properly, and you yourself will also see them at the appropriate stage. Before you see them, you will already have proofs of their activity, for you will become able to obtain knowledge of your previous lives and even of the incarnations of our earth.

In dharana, dhyana, and samadhi you work with your invisible bodies; it is therefore natural that the results of this work should reveal themselves precisely in those bodies. You will now understand how mistaken is the path of hatha-yoga, which by mechanical exercises attempts to bring about the development of supersensible, and therefore non-mechanical, organs. To some degree these organs can of course be set in motion by mechanical exercises, just as a person with neither musical ear nor knowledge of notation can mechanically learn to play a few pieces on an instrument. You will have no difficulty understanding that this is not the proper way.

V. Results

You have briefly become acquainted with the general principles of the exercises upon which the stages of the Path are based, and have come to understand that non-physical organs cannot be developed by physical exercises. Moreover, a general picture is beginning to form in your mind of the system used by every secret school. It is literally the same system that a man follows when he sets about rebuilding a house. First of all he carefully clears it of everything unnecessary and obstructive. Only after such cleansing can he begin the work proper, replacing old parts with material of better quality. Without cleansing he could not reach the places upon which he must work; he would not have command of the object of his labour. He could not even determine which part required rebuilding.

Your task is entirely similar. First of all you must clear the dwelling you wish to prepare for your higher self of unnecessary and harmful things. This dwelling is to consist of your mental, astral, etheric, and physical bodies. You must therefore cleanse each of them of whatever is superfluous within it. The mental body must be cleansed of the dense, opaque cloud formed around it by thought-forms. The astral body you will cleanse of unnecessary desires and impulses, bringing it to rest. From the etheric body you will remove all unnecessary or mistaken habits and addictions, however deeply rooted. The physical body needs no cleansing, because it possesses no qualities, good or bad. It is only a machine, functioning as long as the etheric body remains within it and functioning as that body impels it. When, therefore, you cleanse your etheric body, the physical body will thereby be cleansed as well.

Your work should proceed from above downward, that is, begin with the mental body and descend into coverings of ever denser substance. When you cleanse the mental body, removing the dense cloud of thought-forms surrounding it, you will achieve the equivalent of cleaning the windows of a room. Until now that impenetrable cloud has obstructed your view outward. Once the mental body is cleansed, you will be able to look outward through it, that is, to receive the thoughts of others.[*)] And you already know that such use of other people's thoughts is called inspiration. Another, more material direction of the same faculty is called telepathy, though improperly, for strictly speaking telepathy would mean "feeling at a distance." Cleansing must go hand in hand with mastery of the mental body. Translate this into Sanskrit and you obtain pratyahara and dharana. When you have gained power over your mental body, what until now may have been a fault of yours — scatterbrainedness and

[*)] I use the term "thought-form" for beings created by thought, whether human or otherwise. They are living, real beings, existing for a longer or shorter time. Foreign literature calls them "thought-forms."

distraction — will disappear almost imperceptibly. Your thoughts will become clear, distinct, exact, and strong.

You will verify in yourself experimentally the truth of the familiar saying: "People do, say, and think so many unnecessary things that they no longer have time for what is necessary." You will cease creating useless thoughts that lead nowhere, and will learn always to carry a thought once begun through to its end instead of breaking it off halfway. As a result your concepts will become extraordinarily clear, comprehensive, and logical. Instead of constantly producing a swarm of weak, pale, powerless thought-forms, you will create fewer, but full of strength and vitality. In practical life this means increased intellectual ability, sobriety of judgment, logical reasoning, and certainty of knowledge.

Work upon your astral body will bring you first of all enormous calmness, even while increasing the delicacy of your feelings. Today you may perhaps be incapable of certain feelings, while others throw your whole inner balance into disorder and possess you completely against your will. For some trivial reason you fall into discouragement or sadness, and a moment later leap into extravagant joy, although you yourself understand that the stimulus was too slight for so great an outburst. Such continual oscillation, such domination of your whole soul by one feeling after another, will give way to a certain inner quiet and tranquillity. Through exercises in pratyahara you will learn to rule your feelings, to select appropriate ones and refuse entrance to others. You will also learn economy in feeling. You will not squander feelings unnecessarily; toward small matters you will be restrained, but all the more generous toward things deserving deep feeling. Your sensitivity to emotional stimuli will increase greatly, but it will depend upon your will whether you choose to yield to them or remain indifferent. You will be master of all your feelings, whereas until now you have been only their slave.

The most striking change will occur in your etheric body. Your character, habits, even your voice and movements will be transformed completely; you will become quite another person. One after another the faults of your character, even slight ones, will disappear; addictions will dissolve into nothingness, and your health too will flourish to a degree hitherto unknown. People who have known you for many years will attribute these changes to unusually favourable external circumstances. Yet all of it will have been brought about by one inner condition alone: your will, your desire for the good. At a certain stage of the Path you will notice that mesmeric capacities awaken in your etheric body without effort on your part. You will be able to use them to heal people around you, even animals and plants. But do not make a profession of it. It is only a gift offered to you from the higher worlds; regard it therefore as a gift, not as a business enterprise. You already know that the physical body is only a machine built of chemical elements and kept in motion by the etheric body. Transformation of the etheric body will therefore be accompanied by a parallel transformation of the physical one. I have already mentioned the flourishing of health; along with it you will gain unusual physical strength and endurance of toil, hunger, and sleeplessness. Your "taste" will also change; you will lose your liking for meat, for hot and highly seasoned foods, for alcoholic and narcotic drinks. People often begin "remaking themselves" from the physical body

instead of beginning from above. They change to a vegetarian diet, forbid themselves tobacco or coffee, and imagine that by this means some higher faculties will develop. Here they confuse cause with effect. The appetite for vegetarian food appears as an effect of occult exercises; vegetarian food cannot therefore be the cause of any supersensible development.

You will now understand — and later verify in yourself — why you find here no prescriptions concerning nourishment of the physical body. There are no such directions or commands upon the "Path." The human physical organism (teeth, intestines) is adapted both to vegetable and animal food; moreover, centuries of habituation to such stimulants as coffee, tobacco, and tea have made mankind resistant to the harmful action of their alkaloids. If, therefore, without difficulty and without harmful consequences to physical health, you can do without meat, coffee, and tea, you are free to remove them from your diet. By doing so you will gain a certain calming of the astral body, which may have been too easily subject to emotional outbursts and too ready to escape your control. If, however, the absence of foods to which you have been accustomed for years causes any disorder in your physical, etheric, or astral body — unrest or nervousness — and these disorders do not disappear with continued abstinence, it is better to abandon that abstinence. A struggle — fruitless besides — against habits involving certain foods or drinks would needlessly consume much strength which you require for more serious purposes.

You must distinguish stimulants such as coffee, tea, and tobacco from narcotics in the proper sense, namely alcohol in its various forms, morphine, cocaine, and the like. The mere fact that the organism requires ordinary stimulants constantly in approximately the same quantity, whereas the quantity of narcotics required continually increases with the years, shows you the danger posed by the latter. They gain ever broader control over you, destroy the strength of the will, and make you simply unfit to be an occult pupil. I draw your attention to this not because you are already an addict — there are no such people upon the "Path" — but so that you may understand the harmful consequences of alcohol and narcotics. You must know them, because occasionally — though very rarely — you may find yourself in circumstances where an appropriate dose of alcohol or a narcotic is necessary simply as medicine. It will of course be necessary not for you, but for your bodies, your "animals." You probably know that racehorses are given wine before a race and elephants rum after performing a heavy task; similarly, in certain circumstances you too may stimulate the energy of your bodies with suitable doses of alcohol, caffeine, and the like. You will judge for yourself in what circumstances such stimulants are appropriate when you are already sufficiently advanced on the Path. Here remember only the self-evident fact that such agents can fulfil their function and exert the desired influence upon the organism only if that organism has not become accustomed to them through constant use. Instead of habitually supplying your organism with stimulants, as people usually do, you will rule your bodies and allot them suitable doses only in those cases in which you yourself judge them necessary.

From what I have mentioned so far you already have an outline of the results that occult exercises will give you. But this is not yet everything. It

is only that part of the results which you could obtain even without exercises in modern yoga, by strenuous and persistent work upon yourself, upon the transformation of character and mind. If results so desirable can be attained by work upon oneself proceeding along, as it were, normal lines, then all the more may you expect something from work that is not abnormal but *supernormal*, such as occult exercises. The results of this work beyond the normal likewise rise beyond the normal, beyond the ordinary capacities of man.

Inspiration, rightly rendered in Polish by the word *natchnienie* (literally, "inbreathing"), is already a supernormal capacity. Telepathy is similar, although more and more people are now born with an innate telepathic ability. Mesmeric qualities cannot be innate; they can be developed only by a person of above-average ethical level. In you, however, they will develop of themselves. To your capacity for inspirational understanding of the thoughts of those around you will be added the capacity to feel their emotions and moods. Do not imagine, however, that such knowledge of other people's thoughts or feelings could become a source of indiscretion. No one will suffer through this faculty of yours, because your moral level will be so high that conscience will permit you not even the slightest wish to exploit it. No one — even in jest — will learn from you a single trifle of what you read in another person's feelings or thoughts. You yourself will even learn not to draw from it any conclusions for your own benefit. If you did not learn this, the faults you perceive in people, their ugly thoughts and low feelings, would fill you with aversion, lowering your respect and love for them. That cannot be. Toward all people, good and bad, wise and foolish alike, you must have sympathy, love, and understanding.

Their imperfections should not repel you or awaken contempt; on the contrary, they must arouse all the greater compassion and desire to help. You will understand, moreover, that evil does not exist, that there are no evil people; there are only those who err, and they err because they do not know. Sin is ignorance (avidya, tamas), not evil. Ahriman and Lucifer are not devils or malicious demons. They are powers not evil in themselves, harmful to people only when people submit to them in their ignorance instead of using their power for their own progress.

The capacity most attractive to the ambitious is usually clairvoyance in all its forms. You too will acquire it, and more importantly, you will acquire it without any effort to develop it. You will awaken it through exercises directed toward entirely different aims; you will receive it ready-made, as a by-product, as the simple consequence of awakening your supersensible organs to activity. Already while practising pratyahara and dharana you will notice the first astral imaginations, perhaps even earlier. They may be coloured patches or figures connected with no physical object. Gradually these imaginations will develop into visions of astral beings. Likewise your understanding of other people's thoughts will gradually develop into seeing thought-forms in their colours and shapes, and later into perceiving higher beings whose lowest covering is only a mental body. It would be premature to speak here of the treasures you will acquire through intuition. You will be able to understand and evaluate them only when you attain them.

The development of the etheric body and its padmas[*)] will give you first of all an increasingly exact memory of your experiences during sleep, and later the ability to use that body independently of the physical body. Like modern mediums, you will be able to project your etheric body from the physical, move distant objects with it, and materialise it visibly for others. But you will never wish to use this capacity to arouse someone's admiration or respect for you. You will, however, always use it when you perceive a genuine necessity, for example in moments of danger to someone else or yourself when rescue by ordinary human means would be impossible or too late. Your capacity to use the etheric body will also acquaint you with the beautiful world of etheric beings that have no physical body — the world of gnomes, sprites, water-nymphs, and dwarfs. Add to this the capacity to pass through walls, penetrate into the interior of the earth, and rise through the air; and in other directions the ability to communicate with distant friends or even Masters, and to commune with those who, as the so-called dead, have already left the physical plane; then you will have some idea why the Tantrists devised hatha-yoga in order to acquire at least part of such capacities without renouncing their materialistic worldview.

The temptation to exploit such capacities for selfish ends is indeed great and increases continually as the capacities grow. Prepare yourself, therefore, for the dangers to which these temptations will expose you. Especially dangerous here is the "Hall of Learning," for there literally beneath every flower a serpent lurks. It is the kingdom of Lucifer, who wields so mighty a weapon as rajas. He tempted us once already in the "paradisal" age, and therefore it is not easy for us now to free ourselves from his power. You will free yourself precisely by purifying yourself so carefully that nothing Luciferic remains in your being. Two rulers cannot govern your bodies; if Christ is to dwell within them, Lucifer must withdraw. Ahriman must of course withdraw first, but he is already withdrawing from you since the "Path" attracts you.

You must nevertheless wage a long struggle, all the more difficult because it will be fought within you, in the depths of your being. The trials will be severe and so varied that they will seem inexhaustible in their ingenuity. One inevitable experience of this kind is the coming to the surface of everything that in a person has hitherto been covered by the varnish of "culture" and social forms. "If a chela has even one hidden fault (B), it will come to light during this struggle, however carefully he may conceal it. Vice puts on the mask most alluring to him, and passions poorly mastered drag him into the depths of psychic degradation. This struggle is fought only between the pupil's will and his animal nature. Karma forbids Angels or Masters to intervene until the result of the struggle is known. Every evil inclination, however diligently hidden, will inevitably emerge, but so too will the good. It becomes evident what the pupil really is."

It is literally true that in such a struggle no one will help you until its result is beyond doubt. No one will intervene on your side; you must fight it alone. And, moreover, in darkness. All the lower powers then join hands to make victory difficult for you. Spiritual darkness surrounds you; you see no way out

[*)] Padma, chakra, or lotus flower is the name of a supersensible organ situated in the etheric, astral, or mental body.

before you, no protection above you, and beneath you no ground upon which you might stand. Behind you, however, you feel — though you do not see — that everything pushes you toward this darkened abyss, that you must fall into it without rescue. From every side disasters and misfortunes hang over you: illness affecting you or those nearest to you, material difficulties, danger of losing property or position, an unexpected decline in your standing, slanders injuring your good name, and besides all this nervous disorder, bitterness, discouragement, doubt in your own strength and in everything.

If despite this unleashing of hostile powers you do not fall, if you preserve strength and fortitude, do not doubt yourself or the Master, and do not surrender to despair, all these terrors hanging over you will begin to dissolve like clouds under sunlight. Your shaken circumstances will right themselves naturally, illnesses or troubles will pass, and only then will you breathe freely again. You will feel that throughout the whole time of your torment your Master was beside you, watching your struggle with compassion but not intervening. He deliberately left you alone so that you should seek support in no one and nothing but yourself, so that not for a moment should you lose independence and trust in your own perseverance.

You will have a whole series of such periods of spiritual darkness, each more threatening and desperate than the last. Each time the dark powers will close in around you like crushing hoops until it seems impossible to find any escape from the snare. But if you endure, the knot will come undone of itself in a natural way and you will see that only because of that spiritual darkness you were unable to perceive the exit. Yet both during these desperate struggles and after them you will remain alone. In relation to your fellow men you will always stand rather like a teacher among children. He is among them, loves them and cares for them, but they are not beings equal to him. This solitude will accompany you from the first steps of the Path to its end. You will feel it very painfully before you understand that it must be so, and that toward all your fellow men, strangers and those closest to you alike, you are to behave as toward fellow passengers on a railway journey. Some get on, others leave at intermediate stations, and you bind yourself to no one; you wish everyone well, gladly help everyone, forgive everyone's faults and lack of manners, but you also bid each farewell without regret when he gets off.

VI. Yama
(Purification)

You already know that "Yama," the first stage of the Path, comprises the "five commandments" which occult pupils in India had to observe even before entering the Path. You also know that these commandments, binding upon them in their literal meaning, are today for us rules of the most elementary morality. Go through each of these commandments in turn and consider everything it contains, and you will see that they are not so simple and easy as they seemed.

"Do not kill" means not only refraining from putting a human being or an animal to death. One may kill not only suddenly and violently. One may also harm slowly, gradually, and thereby kill. Moreover, one may kill not only the physical body but also the astral or mental body. If you awaken harmful feelings or disturbing thoughts in someone, if you shake his confidence in goodness and truth, you kill him just as surely as when you give him work beyond his strength, insufficient food, or wages too low. You kill him also when you look on passively while someone else harms him, although you have the power to prevent it. Finally, you kill when you restrict another person's liberty, when you misuse your power over him to force him against his will to do something which seems good to you for him, but not to him. Of course you should not draw absurdly extreme conclusions and say, for example: "I shall not rescue a drowning man, because perhaps in his own judgment it is good for him to drown." If he truly thinks drowning good, then despite your rescue he will try to drown again when you are not nearby. Remember also that karma will often render your help ineffective; but you surely know by now that for an occult pupil the decisive thing is not the result but the intention. If you defend someone who has been wronged but, despite every effort, cannot protect him, his karma has obstructed your defence; yet you have not sinned against the commandment, for you did what your duty required.

The second commandment, "do not lie," likewise includes far more than is usually understood by it. One may lie not only with the lips, but also by actions and even by thoughts. If you pretend to work merely to deceive a superior's supervision, even though he is not watching you, you lie just as surely as when you put on exaggerated politeness toward someone from whom you hope to gain something. If, speaking of someone, you omit his virtues and mention only his faults, you lie just as much as if you said things about him that were untrue, that is, as if you slandered him.

Then you would also be killing him, just as you would if you failed to correct another person's slander about him while knowing it to be slander. When you think falsely about someone, you lie, for you already know that thoughts

are beings which live and act. Those lying thought-forms of yours will go out into the world, attach themselves to people, and incite them to similarly false thoughts. In the same way you lie when you think falsely not about a person but about a thing, when you do not think about it in accordance with what you know, but contrary to it. You lie when you look pessimistically upon life and suppose bad consequences everywhere although you have no basis for doing so. Finally, you lie when you justify your inactivity by lack of strength although you feel that with good will you could still summon sufficient strength from within yourself.

You know the proverb: "He who lies also steals." Thus the second commandment is closely linked with the third. You steal not only when you take something from another without his knowledge, but also when you conceal from him something he might have obtained had he known of it. Silence may be theft just as well as falsehood. When you waste on something else the time intended for fulfilling your duties, you steal that time, just as you steal another person's time when you occupy it with yourself. If, on the other hand, you perform someone else's duty for him, you prevent him from fulfilling it and steal from him the opportunity to work off part of his karma. If you take credit for another person's merits, you steal them, even though he may suffer no material loss. If, however, you wished to be excessively altruistic and attribute your own merits to someone else, you would steal them from yourself and expose him to suspicion of falsehood. Never therefore act in another person's place and never deck him in your feathers. Every excess is a sin. You steal if, as an industrialist, you exploit the labour of your workers, or as a banker exploit other people's money. You steal as a merchant when you earn as much as can possibly be earned rather than as much as corresponds to fair payment for your work in trade. You steal as an official when you accept payment for services for which your employer has already paid you. You steal as a teacher when, instead of teaching, you occupy your pupils with anything else, not to mention personal services to you. You steal as a politician or representative when, instead of caring for the interests of your electors, you direct them to your own advantage. Finally, you steal whenever you demand services from anyone which you yourself could perform without detriment to your duties.

The fourth commandment has changed its content most since ancient Indian times: "Live without indulgence." It was easier for the Indians of old than for us today. Not only do we now possess a variety of means of gratifying the senses unknown in former times; we have also refined those senses to a very high degree.

Tobacco, coffee, tea, different kinds of alcohol, the most elaborate dishes, technical conveniences that make physical life easier — all this is contrary to the fourth commandment. Modern technology joins hands with industry and commerce in order to create as many needs as possible for people, for those needs are precisely the reason for the existence of industry and commerce. You must be free from every unnecessary need, for such needs bind you to tamasic life; they occupy so much of your time and attention unnecessarily that only a small remainder is left for necessary activity. Your life should be as simple as possible, without unnecessary demands in the arrangement of your home, in food, clothing, or amusements. This by no means signifies

asceticism. Mortifying yourself would be a sin against the first commandment and, besides, an obstacle to your further exercises. Care for your bodies as an owner cares for his horses: give them everything they need in order to be healthy and strong, but protect them from dissipation. When you read about asana you will find further directions in this respect.

Remember here that the commandment of moderation in life applies not only to yourself but also to those close to you who depend upon you in any degree. It would therefore be a sin to pamper those nearest you, spoil them, or practise the so-called "monkey love" unfortunately so common among parents and educators. Conversely, excessive severity would be a sin against the first commandment. One can also sin against the fourth indirectly.

The fifth commandment may seem incomprehensible to you, for apparently no harm can result from accepting a gift freely offered. Yet the very notion of a gift contains something unearned, and nothing unearned is due to you; moreover, it burdens you karmically by binding you to the giver with the obligation of return. It is precisely this unearned character that is central to the commandment. The sin does not consist merely in accepting gifts. To the same degree it is a sin to desire gifts, to wish for them. Be always unshakably certain that you will receive without fail as much as you are worth, but demand nothing beyond that. From such desires arise greed and envy; and when they are not fulfilled there arises dissatisfaction with the world, a feeling of having been wronged, and aversion to life. You are to free yourself from all feelings of this kind and cleanse your astral body of them.

Expect nothing beyond what is justly due to you. You will never receive more; rather you may receive less because your karma may have brought such diminution upon you. When it seems to you that you ought to have better conditions of life than you have, first ask whether you would be equal to the better ones. Better conditions also mean heavier duties. If you are sure that you are ready for a better position, then above all fulfil your duties in your present position as conscientiously as possible, for it may be only a bridge to the higher one; and only if you prove fit for the lower will you receive the better. Above all, never doubt that you will receive it. If you desire fulfilment while thinking constantly about obstacles to it, you yourself delay fulfilment by those thoughts. Everything you truly need you will have; but nothing beyond what is truly necessary, nothing merely pleasant or convenient. At higher stages you will cease desiring anything for yourself; for now learn this gradually, rid yourself of desires one after another, and cleanse the astral and mental bodies of them.

You are now beginning to look from another point of view at those five commandments which at first sight appeared rather naive. You see that they can contain both the Mosaic Decalogue and the Christian commandments insofar as these are passive prohibitions rather than active injunctions. You will come to the active injunctions at the stage of niyama; here you have enough work ahead of you until these five passive ones are assimilated by your bodies. You can already see how extraordinarily much yama contains in its modest five commandments. Pass in thought through all the faults and defects of human character known to you, and you will find every one of them without exception within these commandments. Taking the catechism for convenience,

you can fit its "seven deadly sins" into the five prohibitions of yama without difficulty. Pride contradicts the fifth and third prohibitions, avarice the second and fourth, impurity the first and fourth, envy the first and fifth, gluttony and drunkenness the first and fourth, anger the first, sloth the third and fourth. If you go further in searching through human faults you will also fit them within the prohibitions of yama: miserliness, for example, under the third; bitterness under the third; fraud under the first and third, and so on.

If you were not yet mature enough for the Path, the necessity of dealing upon it with things so unpleasant as faults and sins would soon repel you, especially since the very word "sin" has become for many people an empty name without content. You, however, know that you are not without sin, because you are beginning to rid yourself of pride and a false opinion of yourself. You also understand that you must purify yourself not merely of sins themselves, but of the inclinations toward them altogether. Your bodies are to become so clean that even without your continual supervision there is no danger of their falling back into any of those sins.

Consider now what will happen when your bodies are already clean, when you have removed the whole mountain of unnecessary and obstructive refuse. There will then be ample room in them for building in opposite tendencies. Until now you could not build these tendencies in because there was nowhere to put them; every free space was tightly filled with rubbish. Having removed tendencies to kill and to harm, you will cease wishing evil to anyone and in their place begin to develop love and sympathy toward every creature. Having removed the capacity for falsehood, you will no longer cause anyone pain even in jest; moreover, in place of pride you will begin to develop modesty, humility, and reverence for every being. Only after uprooting the capacity for theft will you be able to understand your higher duties and your earthly task. You will learn what true assistance to your fellow men in their development consists in. Life "without indulgence" will give you extraordinary peace and self-mastery. You will no longer have to "fight" any of your bodies, for they will be so clean that their impulses will not run contrary to the commandment. Finally, the fifth prohibition will give you enormous independence from people and surroundings and will protect you from a whole series of disappointments and frustrations in life. It will teach you to act not for some result you have set your heart upon, but for the sake of the action itself, even if the result is altogether different from what you intended or is not visible at all.

Buddha-Dharma mentions five moral powers which increase through the practice of yama: confidence in oneself, perseverance, vigilance (presence of mind), concentration, and self-control. To these powers correspond five spiritual organs of perception: faith, capacity for action, depth of thought, attention, and discernment. Later you will see that at the present stage of our development there are not five but seven such spiritual organs.

You now know, then, from what you are to abstain at the stage of yama and what you are to cleanse from your bodies. The question now is how to do this — or rather how to keep doing it, for purification never ends. The more thoroughly you cleanse the dwelling of the higher self, the more painfully the remaining small defects will offend you, defects you could not even perceive before amid the general clutter. Life itself will provide you in abundance with

methods and means for this work of purification. Treat every event that befalls you as an opportunity to learn something, not as an incomprehensible accident. Until now, when you had to wait for something or someone, you may have regarded it as an unnecessary waste of time, become impatient, even angry. If instead of becoming senselessly irritated you had mastered your impatience, you might during the waiting have learned many interesting and necessary things.

You might notice how unpleasant waiting is and draw from that the lesson never in future to make anyone wait because of you. If you must wait amid a crowd of noisy and impatient people, you may use the occasion to practise two very useful exercises: one in pratyahara, trying in all that noise to feel and hear nothing and not even to yield to the waves of irritation surrounding you; and another in dharana, thinking then about something wholly unrelated to your surroundings.

Every movement of impatience (C. 41) acts paralysingly and even destructively upon the higher faculties dormant in man. At later stages you will see how literally true this statement is. You must rid yourself of the same impatience with regard to the results of your exercises. Do everything that is necessary, but do not permit yourself impatience if it seems to you that you have been waiting too long for signs of results. By impatience you merely delay them; you do not hasten them.

Never permit yourself anger for other reasons either. If someone insults you and you fall into anger, you will insult him in return and merely increase the evil. But if you think that the insult in no way diminishes your worth and that the offender acted only in a moment of irritation or under the influence of his stupidity, you will be able to judge the unpleasantness that befell you much more impartially and act with much greater tact. This is not a question of literally carrying out the Gospel words: “If someone strikes thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also,” but of possessing the capacity to do so. You should receive an insult so calmly that you could endure a second without falling into blind anger. Only when you can preserve such calm will you be able to react to the insult appropriately rather than with a counter-insult. The point here (C. 42) is not passive acceptance of every insult, but behaving as though you were merely the second or advocate of someone else who had been insulted.

You may think now that it is easy to preach theoretical sermons about refraining from anger but harder to practise them, because “man simply has such a nature,” and besides, a man in anger does not remember that he is supposed to refrain from anger. You think wrongly when you say that “man simply has such a nature,” and still more wrongly when you suppose that you cannot change your nature — even if it were such. You are, after all, an occult pupil; you are precisely to rebuild your bodies from the foundations, to change your nature completely. And it can be done; only do not tell yourself that it cannot. When you feel anger seizing you, think at that moment: “I am an occult pupil,” and then promise yourself: “I shall be angry, I shall rage with anger, but not now; only in five minutes. Meanwhile I shall preserve complete mental equilibrium.” Such a promise, given to your astral body, will help you keep that body within bounds. After those five minutes your astral body will

probably already have calmed enough that waves of anger no longer shake it, and then you will preserve mastery over it.

Among the faults (C. 43) which, like anger, ought to be combated are timidity, vanity, superstition and prejudice, also curiosity, unnecessary craving for novelties, and differentiation of people according to external position, family, or race. Look honestly into the depths of your soul and you will see that you are at the same time timid and conceited, although the two faults side by side are absurd. If you are vain, if you have an exaggerated idea of yourself, you ought not to be timid but rather overconfident. You can fear only something of which you are not entirely certain. Yet cowardice is a trait of morally low people, and you have already reached the Path; therefore uproot all the more zealously the remnants of timidity within yourself. Fear nothing and no one, for you are the higher self, and nothing can injure it. You are to enter supersensible worlds, to enter them alone, without anyone's help or protection; how could you stand there if every unknown thing, even every possibility, frightened you?

You will understand the full importance of the paradox that "nothing is more terrible than fear" when you become capable of astral sight. Then you will see how under the influence of fear the astral body contracts and trembles, how the tight rings of "green fear" constrict it and restrict all freedom of movement within it.

You probably consider superstitions and prejudices a burden you disposed of long ago. But are you entirely sure that, for example, your ideas of the sun as a fiery sphere, of stones as dead and motionless objects, of electricity as a "blind force," and so on, are not themselves superstitions? Similarly you will discover that it is a superstition to believe you cannot rise into the air contrary to the "force of gravity," or that sorcerers "do not exist." It is likewise a superstition to believe that one cannot think without the brain or exist without form. Your whole experience of life is also a prejudice if you approach new and still unknown things with it as a ready-made standard of judgment. Your entire "common sense," the whole ballast of your previous experience, will only obstruct your knowledge of supersensible worlds, concealing them from you or at least colouring them falsely. If you approach a new thing with a judgment about it already formed, you will know not the thing itself but only your judgment of it. You must approach it without any prejudice, without any opinion formed in advance. If, intending to rise into the air, you tell yourself beforehand that this contradicts the law of gravity, you will make rising impossible for yourself. A child learns to walk not because it sees others walking, but because no one has told it that walking is impossible for it. Prejudices and superstitions are very powerful suggestions and autosuggestions, and you must be free of them. You must even uproot within yourself the capacity to submit to suggestion at all.

As an exercise in this, take a suggestion as powerful as "public opinion." It is the most effective weapon Lucifer wields over people. Enter deeply into yourself and examine whether you are free of the fetters of public opinion, whether the opinion of others about you is completely indifferent to you. Examine yourself also to see whether you have rid yourself of the prejudice that religion is a superstition. It is one of the most powerful moral forces, and is a superstition only for superstitious people. When they supposedly "liberate themselves"

from it, they themselves deprive themselves of one of their spiritual faculties and voluntarily mutilate themselves. The appendix too is a superstition for such people, because "one can live without it"; yet among occult pupils there are none whose intestines are mutilated in that way.

Curiosity is a fault which consumes a great deal of psychic strength and unnecessarily clutters your etheric body. Even curiosity about news is senseless; you have surely already noticed this. Equally worthless is curiosity in reading. If you read only in order to "know," you burden your memory unnecessarily.

A typical example is reading newspapers, of which after a week you remember nothing. Equally worthless is the craving for knowledge if you load it mechanically into memory. You will make no use of those details, dates, numbers, and names, just as you make no use of undigested food that merely fills the stomach. What you learn you must assimilate if it is to possess real value. It is not enough to cram it into the brain and memory; you must digest it through the work of thought. Only then will it become your permanent possession. Mere curiosity about novelties causes only distraction and frivolity of thought; it penetrates nothing deeply, but leaps from subject to subject, producing superficiality and shallowness of judgment.

You know from your own experience how often curiosity becomes the source of various sins. When you learn of something new, you may begin to desire to possess it although, before knowing of it, you felt no lack. Greed and craving arise from this. When, having learned something new, you repeat it to others without verifying its truth, you may easily commit falsehood and even slander. For this reason the art of silence is very important for you. As long as you have not spoken something, it is still within your power; the moment it leaves your lips, you lose power over it. You have the right to say only what you draw from the depths of your soul as ready for expression, that is, digested and clothed in thought; and even then only after carefully considering whether it should be spoken. Better to leave something unsaid than later withdraw or correct it. And if you speak, speak accurately and precisely. Do not multiply unnecessary words, but do not stint necessary ones, lest afterwards you regret having said too little. Especially when giving orders or directions, be as concise as possible but also as exact as possible in your words. Sometimes a single omitted word ruins the whole action commanded. When you tell a story, do not begin with the end and then return to the beginning, but neither begin with the "creation of the world"; begin from the point indispensable to the whole account. Above all do not "embellish" and do not weave in details that did not exist. One unnecessary word may give an entire account the character of falsehood, and if a person is concerned, the character of slander. When you instruct someone, do not give him ready-made conclusions; state only the premises so that by his own work of thought he may arrive at the conclusion you intended. If he works with his own thought, he will remember the lesson far better than if you had given it to him in the form of ready-made words.

Learn to be silent not only with your lips but also in thought when you receive information from someone. By countering his words with your own thoughts, you cannot direct exact attention to what he is saying, and what you learn will therefore lose accuracy for you.

When listening to another person, quiet your own thoughts and feelings completely, for otherwise they would obscure your understanding of what he says.

For a moment become him; while listening, feel with his feelings and think with his thoughts. Then you will be able to understand him as fully as he understands himself, perhaps even more fully. You will learn this inward silence better at the stage of pratyahara; here it is enough that you understand how necessary it is.

Likewise only at higher stages will "life without indulgence" become fully possible for you, because then your bodies will be so purified that no low desires arise in them. Then, without harm to yourself, you will be able to endure what now would be "indulgence," or at least self-gratification. The most delicious drink, the most exquisite dish, the most magnificent and comfortable dwelling, the most intoxicating pleasure — all this will cease to be a temptation to desire them again. When they happen to be available, you will enjoy them freely and with full experience of their impressions, but without binding yourself to them, without any desire to repeat them, and without a feeling of lack when they pass. Until you reach this, practise moderation and the ability to endure every deprivation without distress. Only then will you possess everything, when it ceases to trouble you that you do not possess it.

You already know of the fifth commandment that it forbids not only "bribes," but also the expectation of any particular results planned by you. Train yourself so that not even the shadow of disappointment arises within you when the result of your work is not what you expected. Indeed, your work will remain of little value as long as you still desire even the feeling of satisfaction at having accomplished it. When you rejoice after performing a good deed, you yourself lower its value by awakening vanity within yourself. Good deeds are not merits but duties, and nothing is due to you for them. To rejoice in them would be as naive as rejoicing in having fulfilled duties which you had undertaken to fulfil. And if you rejoice in them because you see that others do not fulfil theirs, you awaken not only vanity but also commit a sin against the second and third prohibitions. For you cannot know whether they might fulfil them just as well as you would if they were placed in your circumstances.

You may call this too high a demand; but remember that the occult Path leads above the ordinary human level and therefore rightly requires superhuman qualities of its pupils. I shall give you an example by which you can measure the height of these demands. The third injunction forbids lying, but it does not command you to correct at any price the falsehoods of others. At later stages you will train yourself so that, listening to illogical and even plainly false statements, you can remain completely silent in response to them and not even think that you know better. It would already be a direct sin to feel satisfaction or pride that you know better.

VII. Niyama

(The Acquisition of Virtues)

The practice of yama was intended to cleanse your bodies of obstructing refuse. By removing this refuse, you make room for qualities which previously could find no place in them. You already know that niyama includes "shatsampatti", that is, the six virtues, defined with precision as early as the time of Shankaracharya. As with the five commandments of yama, so too with these six virtues, their meaning has broadened considerably since ancient Indian times.

The first of these six qualifications is called "shama" and comprises control of thought. The point is that you should be aware of every thought of yours — of its existence and what it is doing; in other words, that you should not permit subconscious thoughts to arise. Until now it has very often happened that, while your attention was occupied with something, your thought was working in an entirely different direction, and only rarely did you afterwards become aware of the course taken by that thought. If you observe yourself carefully, you will notice how often, while reading, writing, or even calculating, you are simultaneously thinking about something quite different. Even while you are thinking attentively about one thing, a second thought runs subconsciously in another direction.

From such subconscious thoughts arise those apparently inexplicable moods of depression and bitterness, because you do not control these thoughts and so they proceed unhindered to pessimistic absurdities. Temptations of various kinds also often have their source in such uncontrolled thoughts, for before you notice what is happening, such a thought has already aroused a sympathetic vibration in the astral body, and this in turn acts further downward, as far as the physical body. "For first comes the simple thought, then vivid imagination, then pleasure, then an evil movement of the heart, and finally consent" (E. 80). And that "simple thought" is often subconscious; you do not even know that such a thought has already arisen within you, and you notice it only when temptation has already set your whole astral body in motion.

A second task, equally important, is to control thoughts with regard to their "age". Ordinary people, especially the so-called "practical", are very fond of convenience. Instead of creating new thoughts, they gladly use old ones, taken from the lumber-room of memory, sometimes not even their own, but implanted in them while they were still on the school bench or simply borrowed from somewhere outside. Such ready-made thoughts, merely refreshed in the brain, can rarely be adapted exactly to new things; consequently such "practical" thinking is at the very least seriously outdated, if not simply erroneous. And you must be free from that.

In the supersensible worlds you will continually encounter phenomena wholly new, for which your old thinking, drawn from old stores, is not adequate. Therefore, whenever you observe any event or phenomenon, watch carefully whether you form your conception of it with new thoughts, drawn precisely from the object observed, or whether you fall into your old habit and operate with ready-made thoughts from your earlier experiences.

The third task is to learn to distinguish not only old thoughts from fresh ones, but also your own thoughts from those of others. You have probably never before noticed how many thoughts you take in from outside without testing their value. In that swarm of thought-forms which wraps your mental body in a cloud there are comparatively few valuable "inspirations". For you already know that thoughts coming from others are inspirations, irrespective of their value. "Like attracts like"; therefore the thoughts surrounding you are on a level corresponding to your own thoughts. When you cleanse your mental body, the cloud of thought-forms that has hitherto surrounded you will grow thinner, for lofty thoughts are comparatively rarer. The high vibrations of your purified mental body will repel all lower thought-forms, just as a vibrating tuning fork repels nearby objects. Only then will your inspirations begin to gain in value and deserve the name of true inspirations. They will then come no longer from ordinary people, but from Masters or from other exalted Beings of the spiritual hierarchy.

The fourth and final task is control of the logical character of your thinking. It is not enough here to think subconsciously and become aware only of the final conclusion. You should critically traverse the whole chain of thought, examine whether its links are logically connected, see whether there are any gaps or leaps in it, and above all watch whether some stray thought from outside has not inserted itself into the chain of inference. You will then have a guarantee that the whole chain of thought has been constructed correctly, and therefore that its final conclusion must also be logical. In this way you will attain genuinely "healthy" thinking, and such a healthy mental body will exercise a healing influence upon your lower bodies.

The second of the six "qualifications" is dama, that is, control of actions. The point is not to begin with important deeds, but first of all with the less important ones, precisely because these most easily escape your control. Notice how many movements you perform unconsciously. As you walk, you swing your arms or nod your head; while sitting, you play with your fingers or with the first object that happens to come into your hand. You do this thoughtlessly and quite unnecessarily. You waste upon it much energy of the etheric body which you could use more profitably. Observe yourself and you will notice that you do not even know how to walk. As you go along, you strike the pavement with your heels so hard as though you intended to break it, or you scrape along it as though your shoes were meant to polish it.

Besides this, you unnecessarily carry gloves in your hand, or a heavy walking-stick on which you do not lean but which, with complete concentration, you strike against the paving stones. Without these objects you would not go out into the street; yet a half-kilogram parcel would already seem a burden to you, so you have it delivered from the shop to your home. On leaving the house, you lock the door thoughtlessly, and then halfway to your destination

you turn back because you do not know whether you locked it or left it open. While eating, you read or converse with such attention that afterwards you do not know what you ate, how much you ate, or whether you have eaten at all. When writing a letter, only after sealing it do you remember that in fact you wrote about everything except the very thing that was the purpose of the letter.

Such incidents — and thousands like them — should not occur to an esoteric disciple. Every action, whether small or important, must have its logical reason; otherwise it would be unnecessary. Moreover, each action should follow logically from the preceding one. If you go for a walk in order to take the air, it would be illogical to direct your steps into the crowded districts of the city. While listening to a concert, you will gain nothing from it if at the same time you think about your business affairs or talk with your neighbour. If you are setting out on a journey of only a few hours, there is no need to take provisions with you. If one matter must be attended to at once and another has no time limit, do not begin with the latter, because later you may have no time for the former. When putting objects into cupboards or drawers, pay attention to where you put them. If you did it thoughtlessly, you would not only fail to find them later, but you would also overturn other objects whose location you still remember, and afterwards you would have to look for those as well. In arranging them, you would be acting illogically if you put at the bottom those you frequently need and on top those you use more rarely. All these things are indeed self-evident, and yet you will admit to yourself that you have not always followed even the simplest logic in them. The control of actions therefore includes arranging your activities in a certain logical order, so that one proceeds from another and does not contradict or annul it. Only by practising this carefully will you discover how many actions you used to perform unnecessarily, actions that could have been avoided with a little attention and reflection. You will then realise how much time and energy you wasted on them.

Uparati, as the third qualification, includes above all perseverance in keeping to your path in life and, further, taking account of the actual conditions of that path. You may express it in one word: conscientiousness in duty. If you have consciously taken something upon yourself, it is now your duty and you must fulfil it with complete conscientiousness. Before assuming new obligations, consider carefully whether you can meet them and, above all, whether they are necessary. By thoughtlessly taking on new duties you might neglect older ones, perhaps more important than the new.

Naturally, every change is pleasant, and it would be more agreeable to change your duties and activities from time to time than to perform the same ones continually. But you fulfil duties not in order to find them pleasant, but in order to be useful in the world. Doing nothing, you would be a parasite, a drone, merely taking up the place of others in the world. If you imagine that, were you free to choose, you could select duties much better suited to your abilities and more useful to your fellow men, you are simply blaspheming, for you attribute to yourself a wisdom greater than that of the exalted Beings who govern both the world and you.

If you were truly fit for other duties, you would certainly receive them; therefore fulfil your present duties with all love and exactness, so as to show thereby that you are able to fulfil any duty. Only then will you become capable of other duties. Do not, however, regard your duties as compulsion or slavery; while fulfilling them, do not wear the expression of a galley-slave. After all, no one forced them upon you; you took them upon yourself, with full awareness that you were taking them in order to fulfil them. Just as you accepted them voluntarily, you could of your own free will abandon them, even today, at once. In taking them, you took their consequences as well; in abandoning them, you would likewise take the consequences of abandonment. You have a free choice and complete freedom; no one compels you here in either direction.

But look carefully into the depths of your soul and you will see what you would really like. You would like to be able to abandon your duties while someone else, not you, bore the consequences of your abandonment. But that is not right; your conscience forbids it. Thus conscience wants one thing and you want another. You are at variance with conscience, and from this comes your dislike of duties. Yet it is not really you who are at variance, but your lower self, your bodies. They do not like duties; they would prefer amusement and pleasure. And they dislike duties because they are not yet purified; egoism, conceit, whole mountains of that refuse which you must remove through the practice of yama still remain in them.

Here, in uparati, something different is involved. You are not to remove, but to build in. You must build into your nature the firm and enduring conviction that you are under no compulsion whatever. You are an entirely free and independent being. Always and everywhere you have an unrestricted choice. At any moment you may act in a way directly opposite to the one you have followed hitherto; and if you do not do so, it is only because you yourself do not wish to. And you do not wish to because you already think logically enough not to expect that one can choose the cause alone without its consequences. You therefore prefer these consequences to those.

If unpleasantness or suffering comes to you which does not appear to be a consequence of your duties, because it is not directly connected with them, remember that you chose precisely these duties, and not others, in order that through them you might endure those very hardships.

Perhaps you did not choose them yesterday or a year ago, but you certainly chose them yourself. You already know enough about reincarnation and karma to understand that the conditions in which you now live were chosen by you before your present incarnation. Whether you chose them yourself or through the Lipikas is immaterial, for the choice was made on the arupa planes, on which you are not something different from the Lipikas. Looking from this point of view at your tasks in life, you will arrange them in accordance with the aims of evolution, both your own and that of all humanity. Having understood your aim, you will strive toward it perseveringly, without discouragement and without turning aside from the chosen road for the sake of secondary aims or in order to avoid overcoming obstacles. “It is good that we sometimes experience troubles and adversities; for they often awaken the heart of man, reminding him that he is in exile and that therefore he must place no hope in any thing of this world.” (E. 75.)

Titiksha rests upon precisely such an understanding of one's tasks in life and upon the patience in enduring failures and troubles which flows from it. It includes, moreover, tolerance toward all people and creatures. Much is said about such forbearance toward one's fellow men, but people more often understand it to mean indulgence and weakness than tolerance. In your surroundings there are people of many kinds: bad and good, foolish and intelligent. Some you cannot endure, others you like, although you already know that there are no bad or foolish people, but only those who err because they do not know. Yet if you were told that tomorrow they would all leave for America and that no one knew whether they would return, you would behave quite differently toward the people with whom you come into contact. You would be more indulgent toward their errors and weaknesses, you would not demand that they be as you would like them to be, and you would not be guided in your attitude toward them so exclusively by your own likes and dislikes.

Above all, you would not feel so personally offended by every little gesture or word of theirs. You would say to yourself: "tomorrow I shall part from them and perhaps never see them again", and you would forgive them more readily for those trifles which at present you cannot forgive. You would find much more warmth and compassion for them and would sincerely try not to be unpleasant to them. Many a service which today you "do not feel like" rendering, because you can do it tomorrow as well, you would render at once, before they left, so that they might retain a good memory of you. How much more earnestly would you do all this if you were told that tomorrow they were going to die. Even toward your hated enemy you would summon up a spark of sympathy and reconciliation. And after all you cannot know whether one of them may not die before tomorrow. You would then be left with a lasting reproach in your soul for not having become reconciled with him, forgiven his offences, or repaired the wrongs you had formerly done him.

Titiksha demands precisely that you should always behave toward all your fellow men as though you were seeing them for the last time, as though tomorrow they were inevitably to die. Try to experience this thought in your soul as vividly as possible and take it as a rule for your conduct toward people in life. Toward things, however, behave in a somewhat different manner.

Behave toward them as though you yourself were to die tomorrow. They will thereby cease to be so exceedingly important and precious to you, so worthy of possession, so jealously guarded lest anyone else should use them. Conduct yourself similarly toward events, disappointments, or troubles. You will bear them much more easily if you think that tomorrow they will already be over. You will not even wish to complain of them to anyone, lest in your final hours you should appear so petty and impatient.

Shraddha is the fifth in the series of six qualifications. "Self-confidence" here has nothing in common with the excessive self-assurance possessed by conceited or impudent people. Shraddha is carried within, not displayed outwardly. No one notices it from outside, because it relates to events, not to people. I have already told you that on the "Path" you will come face to face with events hitherto unknown to you, and you will face them alone, without anyone's care or protection. How then could you stand before them if, in the

face of everyday events well known to you through reason and life experience, you lose confidence in yourself?

You know yourself how trifling are sometimes the obstacles or reverses that deprive you of self-confidence and discourage you from further attempts. Yet even dozens and hundreds of failures should not deter you from trying again. The only reason for abandoning further efforts should be the conviction that on the road chosen the goal cannot be attained at all — by anyone, not merely by you.*)Remember here the saying of St Augustine: "Potuerunt hi et hae; cur non tu Augustine?" If others could reach the goal by this road, why should you not be able to reach it? You are to follow in the footsteps of the Master; but how will you be able to follow if you stumble already before the threshold? And how can the Master extend a helping hand to you if you lose confidence in that hand, if you even lose faith in the existence of that hand?

Naturally, those powers which would like to keep you on earth under their dominion will use every means to darken your faith in the Master and your confidence in your own strength. These are precisely the periods of spiritual darkness of which I have spoken to you. During them it will seem to you that all esoteric knowledge, with its teachings about Masters and about higher powers in man, is nonsense or madness that mocks common sense; that the road on which you are walking leads not toward light but rather into some bottomless darkness. If then you lose faith in the Master, He will truly cease to exist for you. If you lose faith in your own powers, you will lose those powers as well, and then you will become the prey of despair or madness. That is why shama, the control of thought, is so indispensable as the first of the qualifications. This spiritual darkness can be nourished only by your old thoughts, dating from the time before you entered the Path. It is they that hinder you from believing in something new merely because it is contrary to them.

Therefore do not be too hasty in your judgments, and especially in denials. When you hear or read of something differing from your previous conceptions or experiences, do not rashly say that it is untrue or that it cannot exist. Suspend your judgment, so that you may not have to correct it later. On the other hand, always be ready to change your judgment without regret as soon as you become convinced that it was mistaken. In other words, rid yourself of obstinacy in thought, for obstinacy is backwardness. Such obstinacy is common among people who say that their "principles" do not allow them to change their opinion. Especially in the face of new things, do not cling to your old "principles", but be able to form entirely new conceptions suited to those things.

The final qualification is samadhana, inner equilibrium, which of course is not the same as inner indifference. Stoicism consists precisely in indifference toward unpleasant and pleasant impressions and therefore tends toward a certain blunting of sensitivity. Samadhana, however, is one of the "qualifications" and therefore cannot be a lack of qualification, for example a lack of sensitivity. On the contrary, the stages of the Path will develop your sensitivity in every direction. Yet to feel impressions is one thing, and to submit to them is

*)"If you wish others to bear with you, bear with others. See how far you still are from that true charity and humility which knows not how to be angry or indignant with anyone except oneself. It is no great thing to be able to associate with the good and gentle..." (E. 146.)

another. The point is that, while feeling both the strongest and the most subtle impressions, you should know how not to yield to any of them or allow any of them to master you. You should always retain full control over the influence of impressions upon you and never allow them to throw you out of balance.

When great joy came to you, you used to give yourself up to it without restraint or measure; you simply "lost control of yourself" through joy, as the phrase aptly says. When, on the other hand, failure or pain befell you, you fell at once into bottomless despair. You must rid yourself of such extremes and outbursts; you must always "possess yourself", never lose yourself. Such continual oscillations, such leaps from joy to despair, from optimism to pessimism, would bear poor witness to your inner equilibrium. You know that indifference is not the aim. You may feel joy and sorrow, and indeed you need to feel them as vividly as possible, for through such feeling your organs of soul will grow and mature. The point is not to plunge into them without measure, not to drown in them completely, not to lose yourself and your sound judgment about things.

By submitting to such fluctuations you would unnecessarily consume much of the energy of your soul in these violent vibrations of your astral body, while you need that energy for more important purposes. It would be as though, when intending to write, you made an enormous swing with your hand and struck the paper with your pen so violently as to pierce it, whereas writing requires much less energy. Save your soul-forces, therefore, just as you save physical forces, for what you save is the surplus of your value over that of average people.

And you will need these reserves greatly in moments of danger or spiritual eclipse, in hours of misfortune or disappointment, so that under their burden you may not collapse or lose faith in your strength.

You are now beginning to form an idea of what shatsampatti is. It does not, however, exhaust the range of your tasks on the stage of niyama, because this sixfold qualification, that is, the whole of shatsampatti together, constitutes only one of the four virtues which you are to build into your bodies. These virtues, known in secret schools also as the four qualifications, are: viveka, discrimination between things permanent and transitory; vairagya, strength unconcerned with the results of efforts; shatsampatti, the sixfold qualification already known to you; and mumukshutva, striving for liberation. There was no need to list them separately when enumerating the stages of the Path, for you will notice how these "qualifications" coincide with the tasks of yama and niyama which you have already come to know.

Viveka requires the greatest amount of detailed cultivation. A good preparation for it is the attitude you should adopt toward people as though they were to die the next day, and toward things as though you yourself were to die tomorrow. Adopting this detached standpoint, you will more easily notice what in people and things is transitory and what has lasting significance. You will then begin to understand that the words and even the actions of your fellow men are transitory, momentary details without enduring importance; what matters in them are only their tendencies, their capacities, the lines along which they are moving, or rather merely the directions of those lines. An uneducated man who in clumsy words and rough actions reveals integrity

of character and altruism will be valuable to you, because his integrity and love of people are the line along which he is moving, whereas lack of education and roughness of manner are only passing details without lasting significance. On the other hand, another person's social position, influence, wealth, social polish, even the amount of his book-learning, will leave you completely cold. Flattering words or fine-sounding phrases will not deceive you if beneath them you feel falsity, egoism, or self-interest, because in such a man you will see no line of life at all, or, worse still, you will see a line running distinctly downward. Even social activity, scientific work, or artistic creation will win your recognition only insofar as a man devotes himself to it from motives free of egoism, for in your valuation the decisive thing will always be the motives themselves, not the means by which they are brought to realisation. You will apply a similar test to objects, to phenomena of nature, and to events. Looking at a flower, you will notice in it what is lasting — flowering, the tendency to develop — and distinguish this from such transitory things as its particular form, colour, number of petals, and so forth.

Looking at a forest, you will emphasise its lasting characteristics, such as protection from winds, a dwelling-place for birds and animals, a reservoir of life-giving air, and distinguish these from passing characteristics such as its age, the composition of the stand, its value as fuel or timber, and so on. Reflecting upon a war, you will pass over its heaps of corpses, the destruction of property, and the shifting of political boundaries, and will turn your attention to the change in forms of government after the war, manifestations of heroism in one army as against cowardly selfishness in another, the development of the technology of destruction, and the principles of peace settlements. A thing as commonplace as a lamp, for example, will reveal to you its value for study, work, communication, and safety, without occupying your attention with such transitory details as its monetary or even artistic value, the illuminating material it uses, the convenience of its construction, or considerations of health.

Vairagya is based upon the results of your exercises in karma-yoga. In the preceding chapter you already found indications of how completely indifferent it should be to you whether the result of your actions corresponds to what you expected. Here you must go still farther. It should be indifferent to you even whether you will be able to carry out your intentions at all, not to speak of the fruits of the action. Once you have entered the Path, it will happen more and more often that an unexpected and urgent task will stand in the way of some activity, even the simplest and easiest, so that you will have to postpone the activity you had planned. It will literally be the case that whenever you say to yourself: "now I shall occupy myself with this or that", just before you begin, the necessity of attending to something else will arise. You will not be able to do what you want, but something quite different, unexpected and unforeseen. The Master sends you such opportunities so that you may practise vairagya and at the same time test how far you have already advanced in purifying yourself of impatience. At first it will not be easy for you to overcome impatience when, for example, you are just leaving the house on urgent business and at the door a visitor blocks your way whom you must receive. Even the most trivial trifles will teach you vairagya. When you say to yourself: "now I shall read", just after opening the book you will have to tear yourself away from it in order to

attend to some pressing matter which you had in no way foreseen. When you lie down in bed to sleep and enjoy undisturbed rest, you will have to get up, perhaps several times, before at last you can lie down peacefully, reflecting on how many unforeseen things can occur "between the cup and the lip". Such a "fate" will seem to you a genuine affliction, but only until you are able to accept such disruptions of your plans with unruffled calm and without the slightest impatience. Only then will you regain freedom of action, although from time to time such trials will still recur so that you may test whether the habit of becoming impatient over every trifle has not crept back into your soul.

The third qualification is the shatsampatti already known to you, and the fourth is mumukshutva. This word has been wrongly translated as "desire for liberation" or "longing for nirvana", although it would be much simpler to translate it as "striving for salvation". For the ancient esoteric disciples mumukshutva was in fact a longing for nirvana, because, as you already know, the ancient Indians had only recently left that nirvana and felt ill at ease in earthly bondage. For us, however, people of the present day, salvation does not consist in selfish flight from the earth, but in union with Christ. This union is our ideal, so that with complete inner sincerity we may say: "Not my will, but Thine be done!" If, therefore, mumukshutva is to mean a "desire for liberation", that liberation will refer to our lower self. You are to liberate yourself from the fetters of your lower bodies, free yourself from their dominion, and desire this liberation. This is precisely what you desired, and that is why you sought entrance to the Path. Keep this desire vividly alive within you and cultivate it carefully, for it gives you strength to climb the steep and difficult stages.

When you reach the summit, Christ, you will be free. Your bodies will then be not your masters but obedient and efficient instruments which you will use in co-operation to advance humanity and work for its salvation. You will not long to escape from the earth, but to work upon it; you will become a journeyman of Christ. Naturally, this does not mean attachment to earthly possessions. You will then already stand on the level on which no person and no thing binds you. You will be free. Everything you possess you will place at the service of humanity, for its good. You will desire nothing for yourself, and precisely for that reason you will have at your disposal the most powerful means that the greatest ruler of the world could possess, so that you may use those means for the world.

On the stage of niyama, then, you have before you the building-in of entirely new qualities in place of the refuse which you remove through the practice of yama. Naturally, you will not postpone this building-in until complete purification has been accomplished — especially since purification never ends — but as space is cleared you will gradually put new qualities into it. You therefore see that the stages of the Path do not follow one another in a simple succession, but run side by side; only their beginnings are successive. On the later stages you will see this even more clearly.

VIII. Asana

(Attitude toward Life)

An infant first learns to sit, later to stand, and only at the end to walk, because it adapts its invisible bodies to these positions of the physical body. You too will have to preserve such an order in arranging the body for exercises, if the exercises are to proceed correctly. For the Indians the bodily position during exercises was a condition elaborated in great detail, because they had only recently begun to put on these bodies. The most minute rules were worked out by materialistic hatha-yoga, which, for example, devised for pranayama as many as 66 different positions of the body: 32 asanas, 24 mudras and 10 kumbhakas. Raja-yoga did not attach such importance to the physical body, and therefore prescribed a bodily position free enough to be maintained without change for a longer time. The sole condition was that the body should be arranged so that the head, neck and spine formed a straight line, necessary for an undisturbed flow of etheric currents. Preserve this straight line also in your bodily posture during pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. At first practise these exercises in a horizontal position, lying as comfortably as possible; later you may pass to an upright position, sitting erect or standing.

The conditions of asana, however, are not limited to the arrangement of the body. The Sanskrit word means “posture” or “attitude”, and not only a bodily but also a psychic or spiritual attitude. Even bodily posture means not merely the arrangement of the body, but also its state of health, its condition, its efficiency, and finally the conditions of its surroundings. The most carefully arranged position will be of no use if your stomach is burdened with food difficult to digest, if you happen to be suffering from an illness, even so harmless a one as a cold, or if you are exhausted by excessive work. Nor will the arrangement of the body improve matters if you are irritated, depressed or anxious. The posture will likewise be worthless if you are not sure whether in a minute someone or some urgent matter may disturb you. Thus, for the exercises you need, besides bodily conditions, a suitable inner state and suitable surroundings.

You already know that in hatha-yoga yama comprises not inner but bodily cleansing, and includes rules which for us are as simple as daily washing, rinsing the throat and nose, cleaning the teeth, regular action of the bowels, and so forth. You do all this without any knowledge of yoga, merely on the basis of habits acquired in childhood. I will therefore remind you only that such bodily hygiene is not something you can consider yourself “above”, for you must neither neglect nor undervalue it. Perhaps you have abandoned some of these rules as unnecessary; restore them to your daily practice and you will see how useful they are.

I shall point out only two which perhaps you have neglected. When washing in the morning, take some water in the palm of your hand and draw it into both nostrils as deeply as you can, so as to rinse the nasal cavity. This will protect you from continual colds and will give your voice resonance and clarity. Similarly, a glass of plain water placed by the bed every evening and drunk in the morning, not all at once but in single sips at intervals of about a minute, will improve the efficiency of your bowels so greatly that all pharmaceutical remedies will become unnecessary. As for washing every evening — at least the hands, if not the whole body — you certainly know how advisable it is, not merely in order to keep the bedclothes clean, but above all in order to free the body from etheric particles attached to it from the people and objects with which you have come into contact during the day.

You already know that the real "you" is your higher self; therefore your bodies are not you, neither the etheric, nor the astral, nor even the mental body, and still less the physical body. You must consequently adopt toward your bodies an attitude appropriate to an esoteric disciple. The physical body is merely a mechanism, an engine to which the etheric body supplies motive power. The astral body is a living creature, possessing its own organism and its own impulses, but it too is not you. Even the mental body is not you; it is only your machine for thinking, that is, for comparing, inferring and judging. These supersensible bodies are your animals which, when you wish, you harness to your vehicle (the physical body) in order to move and act on the earthly plane.

Therefore treat your bodies as an owner treats his animals. Never say — and never think — "I am in pain", or "I am tired, angry, sad", for it is not you who feel pain, fatigue or sadness. They feel them — your bodies, your animals. Care for them only as much as an intelligent owner cares for his horses: give them food and rest, keep them clean and strong, but never let the reins of authority over them slip from your hands. You would laugh at a rider who, despite holding the reins, goes not where he wants but wherever his horse carries him. Your bodies must be so well "broken in" that they never carry you in a direction you did not intend. And they will not carry you away if they have you as their master. When speaking or thinking about them, always say: "it is hungry", or "it is happy". You, the real you, never feel hunger or pleasure; you are always only the impartial witness that they are hungry or happy. By maintaining such an attitude toward your bodies, you will be able much more easily to bear their ailments; for what hurts someone else troubles you less than what hurts you personally. And you — your higher self — cannot after all have a toothache, nor can you be delighted by financial profit in an undertaking.

The conditions of your surroundings do not always depend upon you. If, however, you can control them to some extent, choose for your exercises a place protected from noise and movement, not exposed to continual changes of lighting, and, as far as possible, free from objects belonging to others. A small space, containing nothing but a sofa or couch, is best for this purpose. It is best if it can be darkened; beware, however — at least at the beginning — of complete darkness, for only dark spirits like it. Above all, see that no one except you enters this place, not only during exercises, but at any time whatever. The point is to create within this enclosure an aura as pure and peaceful as possible.

Do not even enter it yourself if you are agitated, depressed or ill. Regard this place as your sanctuary — your shrine. It does not follow that esoteric exercises are impossible for you if circumstances do not permit you to set aside such a sanctuarium. It is merely convenient, not indispensable.*)Even in the most modest circumstances you can practise the exercises successfully, provided only that you sincerely wish to do so and do not use every inconvenience as an excuse for avoiding them. Every evening before falling asleep, or every morning immediately after waking, you will find a free moment for exercise. Five minutes a day will suffice; and you can devote those few minutes without neglecting your duties, however numerous they may be. Moreover, during your daily occupations there will be moments of rest or waiting for something which you can likewise use for exercises. If you go for a walk, turn away from the noise and movement of passers-by, preferably into a garden or the fields, and there you will find peace and silence not only for rest but also for the concentration required by the exercises. The physical body and the brain take no part in exercises on the higher stages, so these periods will be periods of complete rest for them.

You prepare your spiritual attitude through the practice of yama and niyama. You would, however, spoil this attitude if you kept what you know from esoteric teaching only for the periods of exercise, while in your daily occupations you continued to use the same lines of thought that you formerly shared with average people. As an esoteric disciple, you should maintain toward everything that daily life brings you an attitude quite different from that of an ordinary person. The way in which you form concepts, even about the most commonplace things, must be entirely different from before. Every concept which you form of a thing must tell you something definite about it, something meaningful from which you can draw logical conclusions. Yet often you formed concepts which told you nothing; they were empty names. Now beware of acquiring such empty names which contain no content for you because you have not examined their essence; do not use such terms loosely in thought or speech. You will notice how often people throw about such words as hysteria, linotype, modernism, radiograph, popularity, disorder, and so forth, without having any idea what these words are or what their content is. Beware also of looking thoughtlessly at various things merely to satisfy your eyes or gratify curiosity. It is of no use to look merely in order to “see”; look in order to “know”, in order to enrich your concepts.

Maintain an appropriate attitude also when making resolutions. Even in matters of little importance, do not begin to act without first considering the need for the action and its purpose. Whatever you have no sound reason to do, leave undone. Do not allow yourself to be drawn into action under the influence of momentary impressions or moods. This does not mean that I advise you to hesitate and deliberate endlessly. Speed of decision is not inversely proportional to how well founded it is. Indeed, you will more and more often find yourself in situations whose successful solution depends precisely upon

*) “He who knows how to act according to inner inspirations and pays little heed to external things finds every place and every time suitable for exercises.” (E. 141.)

an immediate decision, where every delay would mean the loss of a favourable opportunity that will not return.

Your attitude in speaking should likewise differ from your former one. Let every word of yours have its proper weight, for you know that you lose control over it once it has been uttered. Ordinary social conversations are therefore of little value to you, conversations in which people leap hundreds of times from subject to subject, touch topics only superficially without penetrating them, and do not even leave time for reflection upon them.

Do not, however, avoid such superficial company, for in it you have an opportunity to learn how people usually think, and sometimes you may be of use to them by dropping into the conversation some seed of a deeper thought which will fall into their souls and perhaps germinate later. Yet guard against a schoolmaster's tone or a manner suggesting that you know everything better and merely listen indulgently to others.

Your attitude in action should take account above all of the conditions of your surroundings. Adapt your actions, as far as possible, harmoniously to your environment, and beware of acting against it. It would be a mistake, for example, if in the company of people engaged in mental work you wished to practise the piano or learn declamation aloud. It would likewise be improper for you to expect everyone around you to become quiet because you happen, for example, to wish to sleep at an unusual hour. It would also be clumsy to enter a wine-shop and lecture the drinkers on the harmfulness of alcohol. Your innate tact will help you far more than hundreds of examples in harmonising your own actions with your surroundings. The matter may in fact be summed up in one simple rule: always act in the proper place and at the proper time.

You will adopt a similar attitude toward life as a whole. Regard life not as a series of sufferings, and still less as a series of personal satisfactions, but as a school in which you are placed in order to learn as much as possible. Regard your physical body as a horse of which you are the owner, and care for it exactly as much as you would care for a horse. Give it everything it needs for strength and health, but also use those powers for work without sparing them or becoming sentimental about them. You will then more easily overcome the impulse to laziness and bodily self-indulgence, and you will also bear physical discomfort and suffering more easily.

Connected with this is your spiritual attitude toward aspirations, for you will be able to assess your powers and abilities more impartially. You will not strive for anything that exceeds those powers, but neither will you neglect anything within your powers and abilities. In fulfilling your duties, do not submit to them thoughtlessly like a draught-horse that does not understand what it pulls or why it pulls it; instead, try to understand them and to discover their consequences for humanity as a whole. You will then gradually realise that every action of yours, however insignificant it may appear, is needed by the whole, and you will strive all the more earnestly to abandon every action that is superfluous or contrary to harmony in the general progress of humanity.

You will also learn always to act with concentration, even when the actions are small or brief. You will learn not to think of something else while you work, or to scatter your attention in different directions. Even while walking in the street you should walk attentively, not sink into thought or conversation,

but observe your surroundings. You will then make many observations that would otherwise escape you, and may even protect yourself from an unpleasant accident.

Toward your own inner life also you should maintain an appropriate attitude: do not forget that it exists, do not live solely by external impressions and events, but from time to time turn inward. At moments of such inward immersion, put aside everything external, detach your attention from your bodies and their experiences, and try to become as fully conscious as possible of your higher self, to feel that it and you are one, that it rules your bodies as the one reality that is truly real. Then review your actions, feelings and thoughts from the whole day or week — depending on when you last made such an inward review. Such an "examination of conscience", already known to you from the catechism, is by no means something trivial or unnecessary. When your deeds, words and thoughts pass before the eyes of your soul, when you look at them with courage and complete sincerity as an impartial judge, only then will you discover how much remains for you to do in the work of purification upon yourself. In order that egoism may not disturb this impartiality of judgment, look at those deeds, feelings and thoughts as though they were not your own but someone else's, for it is easier to judge another person without indulgence than oneself. The first requirement here is sincerity and truth, absolute truth; as soon as you begin to make excuses to yourself for any one of your actions or feelings, you will conceal from yourself its significance and deprive yourself of the possibility of uprooting that weed in your soul. At a later stage you will learn an exercise called the "retrospective review", which will make such impartial evaluation of your actions easier. For now, resolve simply to make such an examination of conscience, such a judgment upon yourself, every evening before falling asleep, and keep this promise sacredly, if only as an exercise in carrying out resolutions.

The eight qualities which are to characterise your spiritual attitude as a condition of asana are also found in Indian books under the name of the "Noble Eightfold Path". It comprises the following stages: 1. right knowledge, 2. right intention, 3. right speech, 4. right action, 5. right life, 6. right striving, 7. right concentration, and 8. right inward absorption. You will therefore not confuse its stages with the eight limbs of yoga, for the whole of this path forms scarcely one of those limbs. The significance of this path for the development of one of the invisible senses will become clear to you later; here I will draw your attention only to the special importance of the attitude which you should maintain toward your surroundings.

Remember that, as an esoteric disciple, you enter into a changed relation with your surroundings, although your surroundings do not notice this change and should not notice it. You have already experienced many times in your life how strongly the thoughts, feelings and moods of others act upon you.

In the company of sad or nervous people you yourself became permeated with their moods. In the same way your own moods act upon others around you. If, therefore, at the beginning of your "preparation" you are not yet able immediately to master your thoughts and feelings, at least do not permit yourself to indulge them in the presence of your fellow men. When an unpleasant thought, anger or despair seizes you and you cannot suppress it in the bud,

do not infect your surroundings with it; withdraw into solitude and return to people only when you can show them not merely a serene face but also complete inner peace. Remember that as your esoteric development advances, the intensity of your thoughts and feelings will increase, and such powerful thoughts and intense moods will act all the more strongly upon the people around you. In the same way, the objects surrounding you become saturated with your thoughts, feelings and moods. They settle on walls and furniture and adhere to them in an extraordinarily lasting layer. That is why more sensitive people, on entering someone's dwelling, immediately feel the spiritual quality of its occupant even though he may be absent at the time. And be doubly careful not to act negatively with your thoughts or feelings upon children. Their nature, still unresisting and sensitive, is exceptionally fertile soil in which every seed, good or bad, germinates with extraordinary speed. Parents often complain in conversation about their children, saying that "one does not know where they get these" tendencies to quarrelling, lying, slander, and so forth, although supposedly at home they "hear nothing of the kind". It may be that they really do not hear it, because the parents avoid these faults in the presence of the children, but do not restrain themselves when the children are absent. Their quarrels, bursts of anger, social gossip, perhaps even ambiguous words, nevertheless adhere to the walls and furniture, float as a dirty cloud in the air, and when the children return home they penetrate their souls like invisible germs. The children become bad-tempered, insolent, deceitful and sly, although the parents try to set them a good example when they are present.

But your own earlier thoughts and feelings act upon you in return as well. If within the four walls of your room you give yourself up to pessimistic thoughts, bitterness, doubt, aversion to the world and to people, and after a walk, having calmed down considerably, you return to the same room, it will at once seem repellent and ugly to you. Your own thoughts and feelings had soiled it so much before that it now appears ugly. Remain in it for a while and you will fall anew into bitterness and pessimism, because from the walls and furniture those pessimistic influences which you yourself had formerly cast upon them will act upon you. That is why I warned you never to enter your sanctuarium in a bitter or depressed mood.

Your attitude toward your surroundings imposes still further demands upon you. Here it is not only a matter of thoughts and feelings but also of active behaviour toward your fellow men. Everyone, whether as father or mother, brother or sister, educator, commander, guardian, merchant or official, stands within a certain circle of people, closer or more distant, toward whom he has certain duties. Your rule must be that you may never demand more from others than you demand from yourself. Indeed, you may demand less from others than from yourself. Above all, you must not become angry because they are not as you would like to see them. You have a right to make remarks or corrections only when your position in relation to them authorises you to do so, as guardian, educator, superior, guardian of the law, and so on. But it is not only verbal remarks that you must refrain from making when they are unnecessary. Arrange your behaviour in their presence so that your presence among them burdens them as little as possible. Never allow yourself to be tempted into ordering them to perform an action merely because it happens to please you.

Likewise do not interrupt their occupations only because you have become tired of them. Your presence should always harmonise with your surroundings so that it is never felt as burdensome, except in those unmistakable cases in which your surroundings are actually in error. Apart from these, let your presence never weigh upon anyone. It will not be burdensome if your constant endeavour is to demand as little as possible from your surroundings for yourself. Wherever it is not necessary, ask no one to give up his place to you, to be quiet for your sake, or to help or serve you in anything. On the contrary, give way to everyone whenever you can, behave as quietly and calmly as possible, be always ready to help or serve, but only at another's request. Do not impose yourself, your help or your advice upon anyone. Do not impose even your solicitude upon others, not even upon your own children or relatives. Your exaggerated care would soon become a burden to them; your continual questions about how they feel or whether they need anything would become tiresome. In other words, this is respect for another person's individuality.

The higher you ascend the stages of the Path, the more you will develop delicacy of feeling — that inner tact which even without special exercises or instructions will always indicate to you the manner of conduct most harmoniously attuned to your surroundings.

IX. Pranayama
(The Rhythm of Life)

In her *Esoteric Instructions* Blavatsky writes: "Pranayama means literally 'the death of the breath', and the suppression of breathing is unanimously forbidden by our Masters. The teaching concerning the five breaths... has two meanings and two applications. The Tantrics take it literally, but the raja-yogis apply it to the mental breath, that is, to the breath of the will, as the only one leading to the highest powers of clairvoyance, to the activity of the third eye and to the acquisition of occult powers. The hatha-yogis use the five lower tattvas, while the raja-yogis begin by employing the three higher ones exclusively for the development of mind and will, and use the remaining ones only when they have completely mastered those three." This passage will help you understand why you will find in this book no breathing instructions intended to hasten the maturation of the padmas in your invisible bodies. Such instructions will become accessible to you only when, through exercises in dharana, dhyana and samadhi, you have succeeded in introducing into those bodies a psychic rhythm, or "breath of the will". Here I shall give you only simple directions for respiratory gymnastics, containing nothing secret and producing no effects upon your padmas. You will find the same directions in various original works and plagiarised imitations dealing with Indian systems of breathing, but there they are so mixed with harmful or erroneous instructions that it is not easy to select the suitable ones.

The Indians rightly say that we Europeans do not know how to breathe. We put only part of the lungs into action and therefore have to breathe unnecessarily quickly in order to supply them with a sufficient quantity of oxygen. Women among us breathe chiefly with the upper part of the lungs, men with the middle or lower part. Try, while lying flat or standing, to draw as much air as possible into your lungs. Inhale until your shoulder-blades and upper ribs rise. You will then notice how much more air you can take into the lungs than you have hitherto been able to do. A few such deep and slow inhalations and exhalations a day will suffice as exercise for the lungs. Do not repeat them too often, lest you expose yourself to emphysema. After physical exertion, fatigue or exhaustion, a few such deep breaths will immediately restore your strength and freshness, but you must perform them in complete calm and concentration. If you are chilled, several such breaths will restore life-giving warmth to your body. The action here is purely physical, and do not expect any other consequences. The second exercise which I shall give you may be practised only after conscientious practice of yama, for it already acts upon one of the padmas of the etheric body.

Before that body has been carefully cleansed of habits and prejudices, this exercise would be premature and even harmful, both to you and to your surroundings, because you might implant your habits in them.

You should also practise this breathing exercise only in a state of complete calm and on condition that you are entirely healthy physically. Lie comfortably on your back, taking care that head, neck and spine form a straight line. The head must lie horizontally, not bent forward; therefore discard pillows that are too high. Cross your hands on the chest, the right palm over the left, bring the inner edges of the feet together, and in this position draw into the lungs as much air as you possibly can. When not only the lungs but also the abdomen are filled with air, do not exhale it; instead, try by means of the abdominal muscles to force the air from the abdomen into the lungs, although they are already full. You will see that you can do this, until the ribs and shoulder-blades expand. When you relax the diaphragm and the abdominal muscles, the air will move back from the lungs into the abdomen, and only then should you exhale it. At first one such inhalation and exhalation will suffice. With some practice you will reach the point at which, without exhaling, you can move the air several times from the abdomen to the lungs and back again. Do not try to move it more than five times, for this might harm you. *)Do not practise this more than once a day either, that is, one inhalation, the shifting of the air, and one exhalation. Apart from its action upon the etheric padma, which you will notice only on a later stage of the Path, this exercise, as muscular-respiratory gymnastics, will improve the functioning of the intestines and increase your feeling of health and vitality. Naturally, not only during such exercises but throughout the day, you must accustom yourself always to breathe through the nose, never through the mouth.

As you see, the exercises described above have nothing whatever to do with any suppression of breathing; on the contrary, they teach you for the first time to breathe with a “full chest”. This is all the more necessary because on the later stages, while practising dharana or dhyana, you will notice how unconsciously the depth of your breathing diminishes during intense attention in meditation. It is the same thing that happens to you even now when you follow some event with such concentration that it “takes your breath away”. You must therefore afterwards compensate for this diminution of breathing by the exercises in deep breathing just indicated.

Quite different from the doubtful value of breathing exercises uncritically selected from Indian books by European authors is the establishment of rhythm in breathing.

Rhythm in many cases replaces effort, as you probably know from mechanics. A drop falling continually will in time hollow out a stone. A military detachment marching across a bridge in rhythmic step might set the bridge into such oscillation that its spans would break; that is why soldiers break step when crossing a bridge. Rhythm, that is, the repetition of something at fixed intervals of time, is an enormous power, underestimated in our materialistic age. We abandon rhythm even in matters so indispensable to health as eating and sleeping; we eat not at fixed hours but when we have time or inclination, we

*)Abandon these exercises at once for several months if you should notice even a slight pain in the chest or diaphragm.

likewise sleep irregularly, and therefore "our generation is becoming stunted", as hygienists anxiously observe. In the twentieth century we no longer even think of rhythm in speech, music or buildings; modern poems have a rhythm as feeble as more recent musical compositions, and we even regard this as a merit.

For you, however, rhythm — and the most pronounced rhythm possible — should exist in everything: in breathing, walking, speech, activities, eating, sleeping, even in feelings and thoughts. Look at nature and observe how everything in it occurs rhythmically and in regular succession. Day follows night, spring follows winter, the withering of plants follows their flowering, and everything has its fixed seasons in which it takes place; nothing happens out of sequence, nothing too hastily, nothing too late. Such rhythmic regularity should become your habit of life in everything; you should become so accustomed to it that it simply becomes a habit of your etheric body. When walking, always maintain an even and rhythmic step, but not a heavy or over-large one. Fix your meal-times at regular intervals, naturally not too short, and at fixed hours. Remember that the stomach needs two or three hours to digest food; therefore never eat more often than once every three hours, and preferably even less often. Sleep too must take place at rhythmic intervals and regular hours. It is quite sufficient for you to devote one-third of the day to sleep; more than ten hours would be excessive, while less than six hours would be harmful to your health and strength. Unlearn the habit of eating in bed immediately after waking, for the stomach sleeps longer than the external organs. Before eating get some exercise, if only as much as is involved in washing and dressing.

Preserve rhythmic regularity also — as far as possible — in your occupations; begin them every day at the same hours and at fixed hours pass to other occupations, interweaving mental work with physical work, more difficult tasks with easier ones, and so forth. Try also to adapt the kind of occupation to the rhythm of the times of day in nature and even to the seasons of the year. Morning hours are suitable for sober, practical work, even if mental rather than physical, for example calculations, logical planning, and the like; evening hours, on the other hand, favour creative work, artistic occupations, the study of art, everything dependent upon the flight of imagination and feeling. Similarly, the summer months are better suited to outward work, the study of nature and observation, while the winter months are more suited to synthetic and creative work. You will, however, come to feel these subtle differences with your etheric body only on higher stages. All this, of course, binds you only insofar as circumstances allow; if no change in your present conditions lies within your power, be unshakably certain that in the conditions you do have you will find ample opportunity for practising pranayama as well as all the other exercises necessary to you on the Path.

A further stage in pranayama, which you will reach only gradually, will be the harmonising of the rhythm of your breathing with the rhythm of your heartbeat. You will reach the point at which each inhalation and exhalation corresponds to a certain precisely determined and always identical number of pulse-beats. You will reach this not by means of any special exercises, but almost of itself, when you have mastered and calmed your bodies to such a degree that they are in perfect inner harmony with one another. You will recognise that you are approaching this harmony by something which today

you might regard as simply impossible. You will discover that your pulse, the beats of your heart, depend upon your will and that you can deliberately accelerate or slow them. From anatomy you probably know that the physical body possesses two kinds of muscles, smooth and striated. The one kind serves conscious movements, the other serves movements independent of the will, for example the movements of the stomach and intestines. The heart, however, is the only organ furnished with striated muscles, although its movements are not dependent upon the conscious will. But one day in the future they will become dependent upon it, and you, as an esoteric disciple, are ahead of general evolution, so you will develop within yourself this power of controlling the movements of the heart. This does not of course mean that it is impossible to acquire the same ability by another road, for example through hatha-yoga, or to possess it innately. Other higher faculties too — though not all — can be developed by mechanical exercises, but that is not the proper road. You will acquire this faculty of controlling the heart and the circulation of the blood as a by-product for which you are not striving at all. You will acquire it on a certain stage of the Path, just as you will acquire clairvoyance, the ability to project and exteriorise the etheric body, and so forth.

Here I have indicated only the connection of this faculty with the establishment of rhythm in breathing. On the stage at which you attain it, your level will already be so high that the temptation to display the faculty before someone else will not even cross your mind; you will possess it only as a test of that level.

At the proper stage you will also discover the value of the pause between inhalation and exhalation, during which the air is retained in the lungs, and the relation of this pause to the pause between exhalation and the next inhalation, when the lungs are empty of air. This, however, will come only at the stage reached after you have purified yourself so thoroughly that the possibility of any low emotion mastering you has already been eliminated. It must then truly be impossible, for example, for anger to "grip you by the throat", for your heart to "stand still" from fear, or for you to have to blush with shame. And you know from your own experience how greatly outbursts of such emotions influence breathing and the pulse of the heart, how they even master your physical body.

You can now see more clearly the difference between the pranayama of modern yoga and the mechanical exercises of hatha-yoga pranayama. Correspondingly different will be the results. What hatha-yoga seeks through pranayama — the kindling of the kundalini fire and leading it through the etheric padmas as far as the "opening of Brahma" — you will attain without any effort in that direction. It will come to you of itself, because your padmas will mature toward full blossoming. It is like stimulating plants to grow by various artificial and violent means; they may indeed be brought even to flowering, but the flowering is diseased and premature. Your padmas, on the contrary, will unfold naturally, like plants under the life-giving action of sun and air. You will develop within yourself the capacities for consciously unfolding your padmas, and you will preserve these capacities in your higher self through all your subsequent incarnations. Thus they will be a permanent acquisition, not lost after death but capable of being transferred into the new bodies which you will receive in later incarnations.

X. Pratyahara
(Mastery of Attention)

In Indian philosophy you will find a concept unknown to the philosophical systems of Europe. It is "sutratma", which, translated from Sanskrit, means literally "thread-soul". In dharana you will arrive at a clearer image of what sutratma is; here it will be enough if you imagine it in the form of the cable which connects the receiver of your telephone with other stations by inserting a plug into the appropriate socket. By putting it now into one opening, now into another, you connect yourself successively with different telephone stations and receive messages from them. The function of your sutratma is very similar. You attach it now to the nerves of the ear in order to hear, now to the tongue in order to taste, now to the skin in order to feel cold or touch. By attaching it you direct your attention to a given sense and receive impressions from it. Most often, however, you are connected with all the senses at once, receive different impressions simultaneously, and do not know to which of them you should attend. All the telephone stations ring at once and demand connection; you usually choose the one that rings most insistently.

Your task in pratyahara is therefore to introduce a certain order into this ringing; to repair your telephone exchange so that different stations no longer ring you all at once, but so that you yourself can choose the one with which you wish to be connected. In other words, you must learn to receive only those impressions which you choose to receive and not to attend to the others. Life will provide you with the best exercises in this direction. Some of these exercises you have even performed before, though involuntarily. When you walked along a crowded street with another person, absorbed in conversation, you attended only to what he was saying and ignored the words of other passers-by. You did not even notice their appearance; you did not know who passed beside you and perhaps failed to notice the greeting of an acquaintance, although your eyes were open. At another time you stood before a shop-window, for example the window of a bookshop, and became so absorbed in the cover illustrations of new books that you did not hear the clatter of carriages behind you or even the greeting of a friend. Sitting at a common meal, absorbed in an interesting conversation, you do not feel the taste of the food you eat and do not even know what you have eaten. At a concert you listen to a singer with such attention that you see neither your neighbours nor even the singer himself; you become "all ears", to such a degree that you cease even to feel the toothache which a moment earlier tormented you unbearably.

All these were accidental and involuntary exercises, because you directed your attention toward whatever most occupied you at the moment.

Now you must undertake conscious exercises: choose not the telephone station that rings loudest, nor the one from which you expect the most interesting news, but precisely one that is fairly indifferent to you at the moment. You will choose it in order to train yourself to direct your attention by your own will. For example, while reading an unusually interesting book, stop halfway through the passage that most strongly holds your attention and direct it to the shape of the type in which the book is printed, or to the number of lines of print on one page. While following with your eyes the course of some absorbing event, suddenly make yourself aware of the temperature of the air, or of the place where your shoe causes you the least (not the greatest) discomfort. While listening to a concert, try to become so vividly aware of the particular scent of your neighbour's perfume that for that moment you cease completely to hear the music. You will find an abundance of such opportunities for exercise at every moment of life and under all conditions. The examples given will suffice to show you the direction these exercises should take and in what they consist.

Their aim is to gain such mastery over the senses that you receive impressions only from the sense to which you direct your attention, with which, therefore, you establish a connection through the sutratma. You must learn to establish this connection with whatever sense you choose, and likewise to break it at any moment you wish and establish it again with another sense, perhaps one that is giving you no particularly strong impression. In this way you will gradually put your telephone exchange in order.

Beware, however, of one-sidedness in these exercises. Their purpose would be missed if you accustomed yourself always to direct attention to only one sense, because many valuable impressions might then pass you by. You are to master your telephone exchange, not merely to the extent of being able to connect attention with whichever sense you choose. You are to master the whole exchange, and thus be able to connect not always one station only, but two or three at once, and even all simultaneously. When leaving the house, for example, resolve: "now I shall keep all my senses open; I shall not only see, hear and feel everything that happens around me in the street, but I shall also remember it all accurately." And you already know that one remembers only what one has attended to consciously. In a similar way exercise attention on only two or three senses at once; direct it, for example, once to auditory and tactile impressions alone, excluding the others, and another time to olfactory and visual impressions.

Having acquired some skill in this conscious connecting of the sutratma with the senses and disconnecting it at will, proceed to a further stage of exercises in pratyahara. From the impressions of one sense choose only certain groups. Here you must abandon the analogy with telephone stations, for the comparison would now be too crude. When drinking coffee — if you still drink it — disregard its flavour altogether and attend exclusively to the taste of the sugar in the coffee.

When listening to piano playing, disregard completely the melody of the piece and direct your attention solely to its harmony; or, conversely, attend only to the melody and try not to hear the chords. At an orchestral concert choose only one instrument, for example the cello or flute, and try not to hear the others, although they may be playing much more loudly. Looking at a

painting, try first to see separately the lines without colours and shadows, then separately the patches of colour without lines, and finally only the light and shade while disregarding colours and contours. Finding yourself in a crowd of people talking, choose one or two persons and direct your exclusive attention to what they say, trying not to hear anyone else's words. The purpose of such exercises is that you should be able to notice weaker impressions despite the flood of stronger ones. And not merely notice them, but continue to follow them. The point is to develop within yourself the capacity to pick subtle impressions out of the flood of coarser impressions striking your sense organs strongly. In this way you will not only refine and sharpen your physical senses, but will also open for yourself the road to receiving impressions for which there are no senses in the physical body.

Either already at this stage or somewhat later, you will notice such a sharpening of the senses. A bat's squeak contains tones so high that many people do not hear them at all. Perhaps you too have not heard them until now; now, however, you will begin to hear them. Sunlight refracted through a glass prism is split into a bundle of coloured rays ranging from red through yellow, green and blue to violet. Beyond red and violet it is dark to the human eye. You, however, will be able to perceive at those dark ends further coloured lights invisible to other people. You will perceive the so-called infrared and ultraviolet rays. The former will be black-violet in colour, the latter dove-grey.

In addition, you will notice other visual phenomena inaccessible to most people. You will observe, for example, that the poles of a steel magnet or an iron electromagnet emit coloured rays. At the north pole you will see blue light, at the south pole orange. The human body, especially the head and hands, will likewise appear to you surrounded by a luminous glow. Whole sheaves of rays will stream from the fingers, eyes and mouth. You will similarly notice that plants shine, and above flowers you will see whole vapours of coloured mist. During the exercises of dharana you will reach a further development of your senses, no longer physical but etheric and astral, and will perceive increasingly wonderful things. The efficiency of your other senses will also increase; for example, in darkness you will be able by touch to recognise iron, even when covered with cloth, and to distinguish it by touch from other metals. By ear you will be able to distinguish sounds which for others do not exist. You will sharpen your sense of smell to such a degree that by it you can distinguish stone from metal or wood, salted water from sweetened water, and so forth.

The exercises just described will help you in this. But further exercises also await you, perhaps even more important than those so far, for now the task is to exclude all the physical senses at once. A bridge to this is provided by occupying the attention with some mental object, for example memories of events experienced in the past. It is immaterial whether you choose an event that occurred an hour ago or one that took place years ago. Place it before your mind so vividly and occupy your attention with it so exclusively that at that time you see nothing, hear nothing and feel nothing. Do not of course withdraw for such exercises into your solitary corner where you have peace, silence and half-light; instead choose a bright day and restless, noisy surroundings. Try also, under such unfavourable conditions, to read something with the greatest possible attention. Do not, however, choose subjects that

interest you personally, because they would hold your attention even without an effort of will on your part; choose precisely subjects that do not interest you at all and require an effort of attention in order to understand them. You can combine this exercise with the preceding ones, interrupting your reading to notice whether the sky is cloudy or to observe the colour of the hair of a person standing before you. But do this when you choose, not, for example, when some person happens to take a place in front of you and the movement involuntarily reaches your consciousness. For you must beware of all subconscious impressions.

Exercises of this kind can be multiplied indefinitely and varied by your own ingenuity. Do not, however, regard them as merely theoretical exercises without direct results. They are a strictly practical and real preparation, and on the higher stages you will see how important and indispensable they are. If on those stages you are to be able to think without the brain, that brain must first be silenced completely; it must never interrupt that pure thinking with its heavy and slow vibrations. It must become silent for that time and must not dare to break its silence under any circumstances until you yourself wish it. And “you” are not your body nor your brain, but your higher self.

XI. Preparation

These five stages about which you have read so far together form, as you know, the preparatory Path. During these seven years you will have enough work to do upon yourself, and you may count yourself fortunate if within seven years you accomplish enough of it to be mature enough to enter the Path of discipleship. If you perform some of these tasks less perfectly than others, you may nevertheless be admitted, but as a probationary disciple. For it is not absolutely necessary that you should first perfect the preparation as completely as possible before you may receive illumination. It is permissible that in some directions you continue the preparation while in others you already receive illumination. It is similar to what happens in schools. If in some subjects you show only moderate progress but in others very good progress, the general result of your report will entitle you to pass to a higher class. There, of course, you must make up the deficiencies, otherwise you will not be equal to its tasks.

Preparation is only one class, while yama, niyama, asana, pranayama and pratyahara are different subjects of study. These stages therefore do not follow one another successively, but run side by side. If, for example, you read about pranayama later than about yama, the reason is that without a certain, even very elementary, purification it is impossible to devote oneself to exercises of the later stages. The same will be true in the higher class. There too dharana, dhyana and samadhi run side by side, together forming samyama; but without some proficiency in dharana you will not be able to practise dhyana fruitfully. You could indeed know nothing about these three higher stages and postpone interest in them until, after seven years, you prove yourself mature enough for illumination. But on those stages the fruits of what you sowed while practising the preparation will appear; and every true secret school, when it gives a pupil any task, always explains what its result will be. You too should therefore know what results you will attain through preparation.

The general task of the preparatory period is, as you know, the purification and mastery of your mental, astral and etheric bodies, and through them of the physical body as well. Only when you have completely mastered them will you be able to transform them, or "transilluminate" them with what illumination will give you. This transformation of yourself into another human being is precisely the result of yoga. Your higher self will shine through your bodies so that its radiance will break through them. The preparatory stages are only to make this transillumination possible. They are to cleanse your bodies, place complete authority over them in your hands, and repair their functions so that they become efficient instruments, obedient to your slightest command and functioning without fault.

The adaptation of these instruments to the functions which illumination will require of them will take place on the higher stages; here the task has been only their cleansing and repair.

Mastery of the physical body, and through it also of the invisible bodies, is — as you know — the aim of hatha-yoga. By strenuous exercises, some of them very painful (the so-called "tapas"), the hatha-yogi seeks to acquire such comprehensive mastery over his body that he can inflict pain upon it, direct the functions of its internal organs, throw it into catalepsy and project from it outward the etheric or astral body. In addition to these exercises the hatha-yogi "purifies" his physical body by abstinence from meat, alcohol and sexual activity, in order thereby, as it were "from below", to influence through the physical body the etheric and astral bodies as well. This can undoubtedly be achieved, but only partially, to a certain degree, and the sign of its attainment is the acquisition of mediumistic abilities.*)By a simple exertion of will the hatha-yogi can produce phenomena of levitation, telekinesis and apports, and thus perform "miracles" in the opinion of the unilluminated; he can also attain a certain kind of clairvoyance of a lower order (in the lower astral spheres) and establish communication with the "spirits" of the spiritualists.

You already know that this is not the proper road, because it omits purification of the mental body and the establishment of contact with the higher self. The spirit cannot be developed through the body; rather the reverse: only moral development can permanently influence the bodies as instruments of the spirit. That is why I have given you no instructions for mastering the physical body, and have not recommended abstinence from meat, stimulants, or the satisfaction of physical impulses, just as an intelligent horse-owner will neither starve his horse nor suppress its impulses, but will direct them toward his own purposes. If you find that at the beginning of your preparation it is easier to master certain passions by physical abstinence, you may practise it; but do not expect too much from it.

It is logical that purification should begin from above and descend successively lower and lower. That is why you began purification with the mental body. You tried to remove that cloud of small and worthless thought-forms, whether foreign or your own, which formerly surrounded your mental body like an impenetrable mist. Now the space around your mental body is free and clear; your view is no longer obstructed, and thanks to this you will be able on the higher stage to receive inspirations and perceive thoughts coming from others. These will not be merely the thoughts of human beings, for such a faculty would differ little from telepathy, but above all the thoughts of beings higher than men, beings inhabiting those worlds from which men draw inspiration. Thus with the mental body you will be able to reach upward; but the influence of this purified body will also manifest itself downward, upon the lower bodies. You will abandon unnecessary thoughts and begin to think about necessary things. Through this, far fewer unnecessary feelings, temptations and desires will arise in the astral body. Cleansing the mental body of the whole ballast of unnecessary and insignificant thoughts will make it an extraordinarily

*)The famous psychic mediums of the present age are precisely incarnations of former hatha-yogis; this is why the moral level of mediums varies so greatly.

efficient and exact instrument. Your thoughts will become clear, distinct and logical to a degree altogether impossible for a person who has not undergone a preparation like yours.

Your astral body will also change. Until now it looked like a many-coloured cloud without definite outlines, continually changing its form and colours, seething and flickering now darker, now brighter. Astral currents and vortices entered it unhindered, altered its shape and colouring, and produced in it ever-changing outbreaks and boilings. After preparation this body will above all acquire a definite shape and clear contour. Sudden eruptions and irregular vibrations will disappear from it, although its rotary motion and the continual flow of currents within it will not cease — now, however, currents of its own, not imposed from outside. Some of the less beautiful colours will also disappear from it, or at least lose much of their intensity, such as blood-red, grey-green, opaque black or muddy violet, while several new colours, extraordinarily luminous and pure, will appear.

The visible results of preparation will likewise appear in the etheric body. Instead of an undifferentiated mass approximately filling the contours of the physical body, though with numerous growths and swellings, dull and dark and illuminated only at certain points as though by faintly glowing coals, there will now appear a clearly articulated form composed of three distinctly separated parts, shining with several coloured stars between which coloured currents wind.

These luminous stars are the padmas of your etheric body, the "lotus flowers" (chakras).

They have developed through the practice of preparation, and later they shine clearly and revolve in a regular motion. These stars have, as you know, each a different number of arms, or "spokes of the wheel". More or less in the middle of the body shines the ten-petalled lotus; from a bud containing five living petals and five dormant ones, by practising the five commandments of yama you awakened the five dormant petals, and by the breathing exercise which moved air from the abdomen to the lungs and back again you brought the whole flower to full bloom. Had you begun to awaken it into movement immediately by means of the breathing exercise, without first enlivening it through the practice of yama, you would have set it in motion contrary to the normal direction. As a result, the currents in the etheric body would also have circulated incorrectly; you would have possessed mesmeric powers, but that mesmerism would have acted upon others like alcohol: instead of curing, it would merely have put their illnesses to sleep and temporarily numbed their suffering. Your mesmerism, on the other hand, will be pure and health-giving, because your etheric body too is healthy and purified. You will be able to use the surplus of this mesmerism, these vital forces, to heal your fellow men and bring them relief from suffering. Yet your principal task does not lie in this direction. You are not to choose the profession of magnetic healer, for more important tasks await you: you will heal and strengthen souls, not bodies.
Besides the ten-petalled lotus you will awaken other padmas from sleep, though not yet all of them, because some require the practice of dharana and dhyana. The "sixfold qualification" which you acquired through niyama will unfold for you the twelve-petalled padma situated near the heart. Previously only six

of its petals moved drowsily, while the other six were inactive; now all shine and revolve correctly. In the head, approximately at the point where the nasal passage joins the throat, a sixteen-rayed star shines: the "Noble Eightfold Path" has brought it to blossom. An eight-petalled padma, however, still remains in bud, although by working upon the "four qualifications" you awakened four of its petals from sleep and set them into movement in harmony with the other four. This lotus flower will reach full bloom only on the Path of discipleship.

Yet even the padmas which you have enlivened so far give you a whole series of completely new perceptions, for they already function correctly as "supersensible senses". The twelve-petalled padma, besides increasing your vitality and mesmeric capacity, enables you to feel the disposition of people in such a way that you will call some warm and others cold, although this will of course be only a descriptive expression. The sixteen-petalled lotus will add perceptions of light: those whom you called warm you will call bright, the cold ones dark, the indifferent grey.

These perceptions will moreover assume certain forms: you will distinguish the shape of the thoughts of one person from those of another, and even the forms through which the laws of natural phenomena express themselves. These will not yet be exact perceptions, but at first rather general impressions; nevertheless they will strengthen your confidence in the road you are following, because they will provide proof that you are not travelling it in vain, since results have already begun to appear.

Your path will not, however, be strewn with roses alone. This awakened sensitivity of the supersensible organs will give you, alongside interesting and joyful experiences, a series of unpleasant ones as well. You will be in the position of a helpless child upon whom positive and negative impressions act from every side, while it does not yet know how to deal with them or defend itself against them. Your invisible senses, only newly awakened from sleep, will at first be as clumsy in receiving impressions as in closing themselves against them. One unpleasant symptom with which at first you will not know how to cope will be a feeling of suffocation and constraint when you find yourself in a crowd. The astral body extends on average about half a metre beyond the physical body, so in a crowd the astral bodies of others will penetrate yours and produce this sensation of pressure, sometimes intensifying to the point of nausea. The spiritual coldness of people, perceptible through the twelve-petalled padma, will be extraordinarily unpleasant to you, and only with time will you be able, for example, to shake such a person's hand without repugnance. The feelings and moods of others will with extraordinary ease arouse sympathetic vibrations in your astral body. A despairing person will immediately arouse despair in you, and another person's outburst of anger will similarly shake your astral body. Perceiving human thoughts will awaken similar thoughts in you, and if you try to resist them you may easily fall instead into contempt for those people because of their petty and egoistic thoughts.

Amid such painful and joyful experiences, and among a multitude of others besides, your preparatory Path winds onward. Add to this those periods of "spiritual darkness" which will visit you with ever greater force, and add the constant sense of emptiness and loneliness which will accompany you continually on the Path. Do not forget either that the higher you ascend the

stages of the Path, the more the fury of those lower powers which have hitherto regarded you as their prey will increase, and the more strenuously they will place before you all manner of temptations and snares so that you may become entangled in them and fall from the Path. Human blindness will assist them, for people do not like anyone to differ from them. So long as you were an average person, so long as you had defects which others could forgive, you were like them and did not rise a hair's breadth above their level. But the moment you begin to tower above them, you attract the attention of everyone around you. It is not, however, friendly attention, but rather envious.

Unable to understand why you have grown beyond them, they begin to search out in you all your weaknesses and negative traits, not in order to improve you but to reassure themselves that they are no worse than you, and therefore that your growth is no proof of greater value. Remember that in such cases your fellow men's sight becomes extraordinarily keen.

They will discover in you the smallest defect of character, the tiniest fault, however carefully you conceal it, and drag it before "public opinion". And they will not merely expose it; they will magnify it to monstrous proportions so that they may enjoy having found a "spot on the sun". This is not their malice, but only ignorance. They are merely blind instruments in the hands of those lower powers which perceive that you are escaping them and therefore struggle all the harder to hold you in their claws. Remember, then, that it will be of no use if you leave some weakness, even the smallest stain upon your soul, and make excuses to yourself for it or try to hide it from your conscience. People will inevitably ferret it out, drag it into the light, and magnify it tenfold. They will remind you even of the sins of your youth which you perhaps consider long since atoned for. Arm yourself therefore with strength and perseverance, so as to stand without flinching before these attacks from every side, which from now on will accompany you constantly.

Undoubtedly this will not be pleasant, but you must reconcile yourself to it. And it will be very useful to you, because if you wished to hide from yourself even a small imperfection in your character, others would ferret it out and place it before your eyes. It will be a very wholesome remedy against conceit and self-indulgence. Only then will you see how difficult it is to cleanse oneself completely of all vanity and of a high opinion of oneself. More than once you will say: "What do they want from me? I am already so much higher than they are that none of them can equal me, and is even that not enough for them?" If you say this, you will not be higher but lower than they, because they know they are imperfect, while you refuse to admit it about yourself.

Nor is that enough. Instead of a seemingly quite justified dislike of your fellow men on this account, you must develop and maintain within yourself not merely tolerance toward them, not "forgiveness" for the "troubles" they "undeservedly" cause you, but love and gratitude. Be grateful to them for the lesson they give you, for pointing out faults which you yourself do not wish to admit to yourself. They are helping you in purification, not harming you. Never dare, therefore, to feel contempt or aversion toward them, for that would be one of your most painful falls on the Path, from which you would not easily rise. Take people as they are, not as you would like them to be; but shape yourself so that you truly become what you wish to see yourself as!

As you ascend higher on the stages of the Path, you will receive ever higher faculties; you will simply become more and more a superman. Do not imagine, however, that you receive these faculties for yourself. More is demanded of the gifted than of the less gifted; this principle holds even in schools, not only on the Path. All the higher capacities which you successively receive on the Path will therefore be given to you so that you may help others all the more effectively. And how will you be able to help them if you withdraw from them in contempt or even with a concealed resentment? What would you call a mother who despised her children because they knew less than she, or who resented them because their ignorance caused her trouble? Do not say that your fellow men are not your children, because they are precisely your children. You are to be their spiritual guardian, you are to teach and guide them, and above all to shine before them by example. To each of them you are to say — not in words but by your own example: "I have managed to rise and cleanse myself a little; you can do it too, if only you will!"

And how could you be their guardian, their "elder brother", if you did not love them? You surely know that extraordinarily important saying which applies in every field of esoteric knowledge: "Only that which you love can reveal itself to you; that toward which you feel aversion you will never know, because your aversion places a wall between it and you." You will reach the hearts of people only with your heart, not with contempt. And you must win their confidence if you are to guide them. No one will accept help from hostile hands. Therefore it would be too little merely to forgive them for bringing your hidden faults to light. You must admit that they are right and feel gratitude toward them. You must instil in them the unshakable conviction that it has not hurt you, that they have done you nothing unpleasant but, on the contrary, have helped you, and that it has not adversely affected your feelings toward them. Then you will verify in action the Gospel saying: "If someone throws a stone at you, give him bread", because you now understand that for you this is not merely a theoretical commandment but one of practical significance. Then also — but only then — will you knock the weapon from the hands of the lower powers for whom people are merely blind instruments. When the exposure of your hidden faults causes you no pain, does not touch wounded pride, meets with no conceit whatever on your part but rather gratitude and acknowledgement, only then will this weapon, so terrible to ordinary people, be blunted. You must pass through this moral "scourging", for you are following in Christ's footsteps. Further stations of His Passion await you on the higher stages.

Having passed through the preparatory stages, you can still turn back. You can still leave the Path and return to that broad and comfortable road along which the mass of humanity slowly walks without great effort.

You have not yet been accepted as a disciple and have undertaken no obligations; you are therefore free to leave the school. Returning to the world, thanks to the preparation you have undergone you will be an extraordinarily useful and valuable member of society. The capacities developed so far will carry you to a position in life corresponding to them. You will even have the right to turn part of the fruits of these capacities to your personal benefit, because in the world, on its broad road, the laws of the New Covenant do not yet apply, but

those of the Old. Only one condition will bind you: that you use your abilities to no one's harm. If you did so, you would inevitably lose them.

If, however, you have truly grown fit for the Path, you will not stop halfway. Its further difficulties will not frighten you, nor will the commandment: "Nothing for oneself, everything for others." The truth accessible to so few will dawn ever more clearly in your soul: that only what you do for others you truly do for yourself. This conviction will strengthen and confirm your resolve to follow the Path to the summit all the more, because the higher you stand, the more you will be able to do for others. You will desire to become a conscious "helper of the Helpers", to enter at the summit those circles of Exalted Beings who truly hold the destinies of the earth in their hands. And with doubled energy and inexhaustible perseverance you will begin the cultivation of the three higher stages.

XII. Dharana

(Concentration of Attention)

The first of the higher stages, and the sixth in the general sequence of the Path, is dharana, or concentration. You already know that the exercises here aim at acquiring skill in concentrating attention upon one object without turning it, for a specified period, to other objects. You also know that the object of attention need not be a physical thing; it may equally well be a sensory impression or a memory. Through the practice of pratyahara you learned to control your attention, to attach it to whatever you wish and detach it by your will. You trained attention so that without your will it does not leave the chosen object and follow another, even if the latter makes an unusually strong impression upon the senses. Now you are to make use of this efficiency of your attention; you are to employ it, like an obedient instrument, for further purposes.

The translation of the name dharana by the word "concentration" is not exact. Holding attention upon a chosen object is precisely concentrating it on that object, and this you developed through pratyahara. Now you are to use this ability of concentration not merely to keep attention upon a given object for any desired length of time, but to learn as much as possible about it through such concentration.

Dharana, therefore, is already a means of acquiring knowledge; it is a way of gaining illumination concerning the properties of objects. That knowledge of objects can be gained by this road you will understand if you perform two small experiments. Take a pin in your hand and prick your other hand so lightly that scarcely a trace of blood appears. You will feel the prick as pain, though not a severe one, and there you will end the experiment. You will learn that a prick is painful; that is, you will learn as much as a child learns from the same experiment when it pricks itself for the first time in its life.

Now proceed to the second experiment. Direct your attention exclusively to the pricked place and keep it there for a while. You will notice first of all that the prick — if not too deep — is not painful at all. The actual moment of pricking will not feel unpleasant, and already here you can correct your earlier experience according to which the prick itself hurt. Keeping your attention on the pricked place, you will feel that pain begins to appear only after a moment, that it is greatest when the blood emerges, and that it can be divided into two separate impressions: one of stinging pain and another as though some foreign body were lodged in the place of the prick and were gradually increasing in size. Further concentration upon the place would teach you still more; what I have mentioned will suffice, however, to enable you to judge the results obtainable through dharana. There is nothing supersensible here, nothing miraculous.

By simply concentrating attention for a longer period you attain knowledge far greater and more exact than you could gain without such concentration upon the object observed.

Naturally, exercises in dharana are not confined to the sense of touch or to your own body. Suppose, for example, that you hear a bird chirping. When you direct attention to it, you notice that the bird must be somewhere nearby, you estimate by ear the direction from which the chirping comes, and judge it to be loud or soft, pleasant or unpleasant to the ear. In general, you repeat what you have often noticed before in life. Now, however, keep your attention concentrated on the chirping for a while. You will notice that it consists of several sounds of different pitch, that there are pauses between individual chirps, and that the bird is saying something in its own language, that this is more than mere chirping for your pleasure or annoyance, as perhaps you had thought until now. Listening with the greatest attention, you will begin to sympathise with the bird to a certain degree. Feelings akin to those which moved the bird to chirp will begin to awaken in your soul. You will feel something like fear, perhaps pain, or again joy and contentment. You will learn what the bird expresses by its chirping: you will begin to understand its speech, and without dharana you could not do this.

Another example. Look at a chair standing beside you. Examining it attentively, you will notice that it is wooden, polished, well preserved despite use, made of hard wood and very solidly constructed. It seems to you that you could observe nothing more than this, even if you strained your attention for an hour. Try, however, to keep your attention concentrated upon it. Now you begin to see something new. The back-rest is particularly worn, and the front legs scratched as though cut. It was damaged in this way by a person who often sat in it. It is therefore not a chair used during quiet, concentrated work, but either in a dining-room or a children's room. On the edge of the chair there are also marks of cuts made with a small knife; evidently, then, the chair stood in a children's room, specifically in a boy's room. You already know much more about this chair than before; if you prolonged concentration upon it, you would learn still further details. Do not think, however, that such dharana is of no value to you and would be useful at most to detectives. Sherlock Holmes practised precisely dharana and therefore could discover details inaccessible to others. For you such dharana, practised upon "dead" objects, is useful not as an end but as a means, as an exercise in applying concentration of attention.

Another example. On the table before you stands a lilac blossom in a vase.

Looking at it attentively, you will notice its pleasant violet colour, that it was evidently cut not long ago because there are no signs of withering, that some of the small flowers are still closed in buds while others are already fully open. You will notice in addition that the colouring is not identical in all of them; some of the little flowers are lighter than others, and you will notice that each has four petals, while only very rarely will you encounter five petals or more.

Now apply dharana, that is, continue to keep your attention concentrated. You begin to distinguish the older flowers from those freshly opened, because the older ones are lighter in colour; they simply "turn grey". Moreover their colour is more dull, whereas that of the fresh flowers is lustrous. Looking

more closely, you see that it is not "shining" which gives the fresh flowers this brightness; they look rather as though they were moist. Yet it is not moisture either, as you can verify by touch. While thinking how to define it, you relax the intensity of your sight for a moment, and then notice something which at first you take to be fatigue of the eyes: the flowers are covered with a luminous mist. Yet this is not a hallucination, because you see the older flowers clearly, whereas the outlines of the fresher ones dissolve into a kind of downy haze. Thus through dharana you have reached the first perceptions of the etheric aura of flowers, their luminous halo.

From these few examples you can already form a conception of the direction in which your exercises in dharana should proceed. You will also understand that you can practise them everywhere and always; no special objects or separate hours are needed, because every day and under all conditions of your surroundings you will find opportunities for exercise. Every object seen, every sound heard, every impression felt will provide such opportunities.

Do not imagine, however, that dharana necessarily requires the use of one sense only. In pratyahara you learned to switch various "telephone stations" on and off at will; now apply this skill. The more senses, simultaneously or successively, you direct toward the object examined, the more extensive the knowledge you will acquire about it. In observing a flower, do not merely look at it, but also touch it, smell it, even taste it. Having gathered in this way as many impressions as possible from the object, direct attention to the effect of these impressions upon your soul, and you will learn something more. You will learn what impression a given object makes not merely upon your physical senses, but also upon your inner senses, the "lotus flowers". You will begin not only to see, hear, smell and taste the object, but also to feel its action upon your inner being. This feeling will at first be weak and indistinct, but with exercise it will gain in clarity and intensity.

This is already a higher stage in the practice of dharana. You will find ample opportunities for such exercises in your surroundings at every hour, without withdrawing from your daily duties and occupations.

Dr R. Steiner (C) already recommends some of these exercises during the preparatory period; I shall quote his instructions here: "By frequently directing attention to phenomena of blossoming and ripening, one will experience a feeling which can remotely be compared with the impression produced by sunrise. Phenomena of withering and dying, on the other hand, arouse feelings somewhat similar to those produced by the sight of the moon slowly rising on the horizon. These two feelings are two forces which, when developed ever more vividly, lead to the greatest occult results. One should first observe the objects as exactly as possible, and only then surrender oneself to the feeling arising in the soul." Do not be discouraged if similar feelings do not appear immediately during your first attempts, and still more carefully beware of suggesting them to yourself. They will certainly appear with patience and perseverance in repeating the exercises again and again. But if you suggested them to yourself instead of actually feeling them, you would close off the possibility of ever feeling them genuinely in the future.

If you can practise the exercises described above successfully, after some time you may add dharana directed toward supersensible objects, for example

organs in your etheric body. Here, however, you must choose a suitable time and surroundings — silence and darkness or at least half-light. Arrange the body comfortably, as for the breathing exercises, arouse within yourself a peaceful mood and exclude all physical senses from activity. Then direct attention to one point of the body chosen at will, but define its position exactly, for example the big toe of the left foot. Concentrate so intensely on this toe that you feel, hear and see nothing else. For a while you will feel in it nothing more than increased warmth. This will be caused by prana flowing more vigorously into the toe under the pressure of your attention. Later, however, you will be able to feel something more: you will notice that your tactile sensitivity has shifted from the whole body into this point, into this toe. If now your foot, although covered by footwear, touches the edge of the bed or chair, you will feel this contact extraordinarily distinctly, even painfully.

If you can maintain this intense concentration of attention still longer, you will notice phenomena all the more unusual; at the first moment you may not even believe in their reality. Your tactile sensitivity from the whole body has shifted not only into that one toe, but has also spread into the air around it. The whole toe seems surrounded by a layer of sensitivity floating about it. You distinctly feel not only the shoe but even the nearby material of the bed or the covering of the sofa, although the toe does not touch them. End the experiment at this point, because carrying it farther could at your present stage have undesirable consequences with which you would not know how to cope.

Naturally, at the first attempt you will achieve no result; you must repeat the exercises.

This exercise will prepare you for the next, which already leads to wholly supersensible impressions; but do not pass on to the next until you have obtained results in this preparatory exercise. Naturally, you may — and indeed should — choose the points of the body for these exercises freely, a different one each time; beware, however, of prolonging an exercise beyond measure. Three to five minutes will suffice; after that stop, even if you have not yet obtained any result. Remember also that exercises of this kind are not compulsory; it depends entirely upon your will whether you wish to try them at all. Without them you can reach the higher stages just as well, just as without the breathing exercises described under pranayama you can without difficulty reach the following stages. They are like optional subjects in a school curriculum; one can obtain a good certificate without them, and they exist only for those who have the inclination and liking for them.

The next exercise which I shall now describe is likewise optional. As in the preceding exercise, turn your attention away from all the senses and direct it toward one of the padmas in your etheric body, for example the padma near the heart. With complete concentration try to feel your way into this one point, although for the moment you will not even be able to define its position. After several fruitless attempts you will feel the padma more distinctly and will then be able to determine exactly where it is situated. When you experience it for the first time, the feeling will be so entirely new and unlike all feelings known to you that it could perhaps be compared only with the experience of a woman who is to become a mother for the first time and feels within her body the first

movements of the future child. In this case, however, they are not physical movements, and yet you will feel them clearly at a certain definite point of the physical body. What you will be unable to determine is the depth at which this point lies beneath the surface of the body. At one moment it will seem to you that this moving point lies just beneath the skin, at another that it lies much deeper, almost by the heart itself (if you have chosen the twelve-petalled padma).

You will also notice that it is not a tiny point but something occupying a fairly considerable space, although you will likewise be unable to determine its dimensions. You will have achieved much if you reach an awareness of the kind of movement occurring in this organ. Do not, however, hasten to suggest to yourself that you feel a rotary movement, for these sensations vary greatly from one individual to another.

You will notice only that this movement is of an entirely different kind from the movement of the physical heart. In a similar way you may attempt dharana upon your other padmas. If you practise these exercises perseveringly, later you may even come to see the padmas in their colours and lights, and then you will also see clearly the nature of their movements.

While practising such exercises, never forget for a moment that extraordinary perseverance and patience are required. It is quite possible that despite long repetition of these exercises you will apparently perceive no results whatever; it is also possible that you will perceive results quite different from what you imagined. It would be a mistake to form beforehand any conception of what the results ought to look like, because you would then bend the exercises to fit this conception, which of course would differ from reality. You already know that on the Path you are to beware of preconceived opinions unsupported by fact; therefore here all the more beware of imagining beforehand what the result will be. Practise the exercises only with all the patience and perseverance of which you are capable; practise them for the exercises themselves, not for the result. The result will certainly appear, though not necessarily at the time when you think it ought already to appear. You have before you at least seven years, and perhaps fourteen if during the first seven you do not possess sufficient perseverance.

Do not, however, let this series of years alarm or discourage you. Do not say to yourself: “If I must wait so long for results, perhaps my life will not last long enough to attain them.” Above all remember that you work not for results but for the work itself; secondly, remember that before you lies not only this one life but a whole series of subsequent lives. This does not mean that in your present incarnation you are to attain no results at all. That depends solely and entirely upon you, upon your patience and perseverance. Your age has no influence here either, even if your youth is already long behind you. It often happens that only toward the end of life a person’s former materialistic conceptions change into their very opposite, and as a consequence he turns toward the “Path”. Such people afterwards become the most capable disciples, because on the Path they no longer have the hindrances arising from bodily desires, ambition, attachment to life, and so forth; they can therefore more easily traverse the preparatory stages and, as it were, pass immediately into

the higher class, especially since life itself may have been for them an excellent preparatory school.

Here is what Leadbeater says of himself (H, 469, I): "Personally I made no effort, thinking that I had not the proper etheric body, until on one occasion the Master indicated to me a certain meditation which would lead to results. I practised it and obtained success... I have never heard that there is any age limit here." Notice three things: there is no age limit, nothing more than the appropriate meditation is required, and there is the question of the quality of the etheric body.

You have probably already understood the first two; as to the third, remember that if you did not possess a suitable etheric body you would not feel that the "Path" is the right one for you; then hatha-yoga, for example, would appear much better to you and you would go in that direction.

Now I shall give you an exercise indicated by W. Judge, so beneficial that you must include it among your obligatory daily exercises. During the preparatory stage you have probably already acquired the habit of making every evening a short "examination of conscience", reviewing and judging your actions, feelings and thoughts of the whole day. You also know that in this examination of conscience it matters less that you recall every event of the day than that you assume the proper attitude toward them. You are to look upon your deeds, words and thoughts and judge them as though it were not you who had performed them, but another person. In this way you judge them much more impartially.

Now combine this daily — and it should indeed be daily — examination of conscience with the following exercise. Instead of making the review in the usual way, from morning through noon to evening, reverse this order, which seems "normal" to ordinary people. Begin with the evening, with what you did or thought a moment ago, and go back in thought to progressively earlier events. Thus, instead of taking one event in thought and recalling what happened afterwards, proceed in the opposite direction and bring to mind what happened before it, and before that still earlier. In this way pass mentally through the day that has gone by, but backwards, from evening through noon to morning.

The point is not that you should remember without exception every event, every thought and every word, but that you should keep your attention upon the one chain of thought whose links are memory-images arranged in an order dependent upon your will. You are to recall the events of the day, but not in the order in which they followed one another; rather, in reverse. Here you lack the auxiliary means used in ordinary life, namely the causal linking of events; you do not arrange them as one flowed from another, but contrariwise: first the effect comes before your eyes, and only afterwards the cause. You must therefore exert the will more strongly in order to maintain attention upon such a reversed chain of events.

And the benefit is threefold. First of all, you learn to judge events in themselves without entering into the causes that produced them, and this is a much more impartial judgment. Take such a simple case as this: in the morning, for example, you were to meet someone about a matter of mutual

concern, but he did not come to the agreed place. This upset you; you sent for him, waited until he came, and then spoke several harsh words to him.

Reflecting in the evening upon the past day, you first reach those harsh words and see that they were unworthy of you as an esoteric disciple.

If you had begun the reflection with the morning events, the memory of that unpleasant waiting would have agitated you anew, and when later your memory reached your harsh words, you would have regarded them as justified. Thus you now have a more impartial way of looking at your conduct.

The second benefit lies in the fact that you learn to think in images. If you made this examination of conscience in the ordinary way, you would think rather in words than in pictures. You would say to yourself in thought: "He does not come, I wait, I send for him, I tell him some home truths", and so forth, because here one thing follows from another like cause and effect. But when thinking backwards, you have before you, for example, only those harsh words without their cause; in order to recall them clearly, you must reconstruct in memory the picture of the situation. You stand opposite him and speak to him reproachfully. To remember this scene you need its image, not words. And it is precisely the formation of memory-images that is intended here. Passing in memory through the day from evening backward to morning, you are to see yourself in the recollections as clearly as in a mirror or in a moving picture. You are to look upon the events as you would look at a film projected in reverse, from the end to the beginning. Do not omit even such apparently trivial details as the fact that, returning home in the evening, you climbed the stairs. Here you must see yourself first at the door of your dwelling, then coming backward through it and descending backward down the stairs (whereas in reality you went up them). Likewise, when recalling the way home, you are to see yourself going backward from your home toward the town. And always you are to see yourself as though you were another person at whom you are looking.

The third benefit is this very reversal of succession, this, as it were, "reversal of time". By training yourself in this way to pass in thought through events from the latest backward to progressively earlier ones, you prepare the ground for astral thinking, which later will be indispensable to you. When you begin consciously to enter the astral plane, you would not be able to orient yourself in its events and would take causes for effects if you retained the earthly mode of thinking. Your own dreams will provide examples of this "reversal of time" in the astral world.

For example, you dream that a robber enters your room to murder you. You defend yourself desperately, but he overcomes you and fires at you with a revolver from close range. You hear the report; you distinctly feel pain in the heart and a gradual loss of life, and... you awake. It is apparently a perfectly logical drama, because everything follows in succession as cause and effect; yet in reality the matter occurred in exactly the reverse order. You awoke because beforehand, in your sleep, you had turned onto your left side and were pressing strongly upon your heart. This pressure caused your body to make involuntary movements in which you struck a chair.

The knocking of the chair produced your dream of the revolver shot and the murderer. Thus first came the pain in the heart, afterwards the knocking, and

still later you composed for yourself the image of the murderer. On waking, you reverse this order of events into one directly opposite to the actual order.

You now understand the full importance of this "retrospective review" (Rückschau) in judging your daily conduct by conscience, and you know what is essential in it. The point is therefore not that in this retrospective review you omit no small event, insignificant word or thought, but that you actually perform the review in reverse order, from the end to the beginning, and that you see yourself in it pictorially instead of narrating the events to yourself in thought. Nor is it necessary that the review should reach all the way to the morning events; it is enough if you reach noon, or even not so far. The purpose of the exercise is to give your thoughts a new direction and a new quality. You are to acquire skill in arranging the order of remembered events according to your will, not according to the order in which they actually followed one another. That "normal" order is independent of you, imposed upon you by external reality, and you are to become free of it. In addition, the greatest possible distinctness of memory-images is indispensable to you; why you need it you will understand in the next chapter. Already here you can judge the value of the retrospective review for the impartiality of your examination of conscience. You will look differently upon your actions, words and thoughts and judge them more impartially, because your judgment will no longer be clouded as strongly as before by feelings and apparently logical motives.

XIII. Imagination

(Astral Vision)

The practice of dharana opens the road to imagination, that is, to "pictorial perception". You already know that imagination has nothing in common with hallucination, illusion, autosuggestion and similar pathological phenomena. A picture is called in Latin *imago*, but a picture is by no means an illusion. Without the existence of a real object, its image could not arise in a mirror. Everything you know about the external world through the senses likewise consists only of images, not reality itself. A "table", for example, is for you the image of a certain object obtained from the sum of your tactile, visual, olfactory, and other impressions. You have looked at the table, touched it, lifted it, and this sum of sensory impressions formed in your mind the image "table". You call this sum of impressions a "table" and can reproduce it in memory whenever you wish; an image of that table will then appear in memory. This image could not appear if you had not previously gathered the necessary sum of visual, tactile, and other impressions. When someone tells you about an event, you can "imagine" it, you can call up in thought images of the individual phases of that event, you can "picture" it to yourself. Your image of a table actually seen is an imagination of that table created on the basis of your own impressions; the image of an event heard about or read about is, on the other hand, an imagination formed from inner impressions. You did not see the event that was described to you, and yet under the influence of the narrative pictures of that event arise in your soul. They arise because the narrative makes an impression upon you.

Imaginations, therefore, may be formed from external impressions or from inner impressions. The fact that listening to a narrative is an auditory, and therefore external, impression does not alter the matter. Listening awakens inner impressions in your soul, and impressions so strong that they can evoke images as distinct as if you had looked at the events being described. Recall how vivid the imaginations evoked in the soul by the works of good novelists can be, for example Sienkiewicz, Prus, Rodziewiczówna or Orzeszkowa. Return now to the imagination of the table. It is a physical, external object which you can examine with the senses. While examining it, you direct attention to it, and the distinctness of the imagination you can afterwards form depends upon the intensity of that attention. But this examination awakens no feelings in your soul; you are completely indifferent toward the table. Other objects, however, can awaken certain feelings in the soul, and then imaginations of such objects will be much more vivid. There are moreover objects (and beings) which you cannot examine by any physical sense, because they themselves are not physical.

Yet they exist and make impressions upon non-physical senses. From these impressions imaginations can likewise arise, and dharana opens the road to such imaginations.

Naturally, the description of an imagination arising from supersensible impressions encounters difficulties, because there are no names for such impressions. If you wish to use expressions intelligible to everyone, you must employ names taken from the sensory world, expressing only approximately what you wish to say. They will therefore be merely analogous terms. A supersensible object may, for example, make an impression similar to that which the colour blue makes upon physical sight. In such a case you will say: "I see blue", although it will not be seeing with the eyes, but only an impression similar to that which you would receive on looking at the colour blue. Keeping in mind that the names for such impressions must be only approximate because we possess no exact words, perform the following exercise. Observe as attentively as possible any animal you choose, so that afterwards you can form as distinct an imagination of it as possible. This will be an imagination from sensory impressions. In the same way observe a plant and again form an exact imagination. Finally observe in the same way a stone, preferably a transparent crystal. You therefore have in your soul three separate imaginations. Now place them side by side and try to perceive what is individual in each and distinguishes it from the others. Stone, plant and animal each has a certain form, a certain shape. But the stone does not move or visibly grow and has no organs or limbs; it merely exists. The plant also exists and likewise does not change its place, but it grows, blossoms, ripens, changes its form, and has certain organs for growth and fruiting. The animal, finally, likewise grows and matures, but in addition moves under the influence of desires and impulses and receives impressions through the senses. The form of the stone was created by forces free of desire; the plant owes its form to forces of growth; the animal owes its form to desires. Now concentrate attention upon these three kinds of forces, concentrate so vividly that distinct feelings arise in your soul, and after a series of exercises you will arrive at an entirely new imagination, because it is inner. The feeling awakened in the soul by the impression of the stone will evoke an imagination which, by comparison with visual impressions, you will call violet-blue. The imagination evoked by the plant will give you an impression similar to that which you experience in the presence of green; and the imagination evoked by the animal will give you the feeling of orange-red. You already know that this will not be a visual impression: you will not see the stone as violet or the animal as orange; you will merely receive impressions resembling those produced upon you by the corresponding colours. With further exercises you will notice that every stone produces a different shade of the blue-violet impression; every animal has its own shade of yellowish red, and similarly every plant a different green shade, passing even into light pink.

If the exercises — practised, of course, with the patience and perseverance already known to you — lead you to the result just described, you will experience your first supersensible imaginations. You will have an example of the manner in which external physical objects express themselves to your inner organs. Once you are able to feel such supersensible impressions coming from

sensory objects, you will also rise to the perception of impressions made by supersensible objects which do not exist for the physical senses. On the etheric and astral planes there are innumerable objects and beings which make no impression whatever upon the physical senses. They can be perceived only by "supersensible" senses, that is, by organs of the etheric or astral body. You already know from experiences made during the preparatory period that in the presence of certain people or objects you feel an impression of cold, in the presence of others of warmth; some you call dark, others bright. Now to these impressions of warmth and brightness there will be added impressions which you can compare with colours.

They will be impressions of colours not proceeding from any visible object. Looking with the physical eye, you see a colour and at the same time the object that possesses that colour; you see its coloured surface. But colour is not something that must always be connected with an object. Colour in itself also makes an impression, even a very strong one; you need only train yourself to become conscious of that impression. Look into the depths of a blue sky and try to make yourself conscious not of the substance of that layer of blue air, but of the colour itself, the blueness itself. Surrender yourself to the feeling of the colour, not of the air. After some practice you will become aware that blue not only makes a soothing impression but actually draws you toward itself and, while drawing you, expands. In blue you lose the sense of limitation by spatial dimensions; you move into the depths of that blue, away from yourself, feeling neither its boundaries nor your own. Now perform a similar experiment with another colour, for example red. Fix your gaze upon red cloth or red paper; try not to see the material of the cloth or paper, but only the colour itself, the redness itself. After several attempts you will feel that the red strongly advances toward you, limits and presses upon you, that it is actually obtrusive and egoistic. Through pratyahara you have already learned to choose at will the impressions to which you wish to surrender and to disregard other simultaneous impressions; here, therefore, you will be able not to see the cloth or paper but only the colour itself.

In the supersensible worlds, then, there are beings whose impressions upon you can be described in ordinary language as resembling colours. These colours are not the beings themselves, but their expression.

If, therefore, you suddenly receive the impression of a colour floating freely in space before you without any visible object, you have before you an astral being expressing itself through precisely that colour. Here you have an imagination formed neither from sensory impressions nor from memory-images. At first you will take such coloured visions for hallucinations or symptoms of eye fatigue; soon, however, you will notice that no physical cause produces them and that they have nothing in common with illusions. As you accumulate a certain number of such colour-imaginations, you will also learn to direct close attention to them immediately when they appear. You will notice that they appear suddenly and last very briefly, at most a few seconds. You will also notice that these colour phenomena have no spatial dimensions: you will be unable to determine their size or depth, and sometimes you will have the impression that you are inside a coloured cloud. Later you will also be able to judge certain differences in the quality of the colours themselves, apart from

differences of shade. Sometimes they will be colours — brilliant indeed — but as though turbid and opaque; sometimes again as pure as coloured lights, and sometimes radiant and sparkling in nature. To these observations there will gradually be added the feeling that turbid colours are imaginations of lower astral beings, luminous colours of higher ones, while sparkling rays will be perceived only exceptionally, as imaginations of the most exalted beings.

When you begin to experience such imaginative visions, you may rejoice in them and admire them, but do not try to interpret them for yourself. Try only to remember them as exactly as possible, but do not attempt through mental speculation to draw any conclusions about what these coloured visions mean. Try even not to clothe them in words, and still less to speak of them to anyone. Those who stand higher than you on the Path will perceive what you see much better than if you were to describe it to them. Those who stand lower than you would not understand what you said, because it would be premature for them. The more imaginative experiences you gather, the more clearly you will understand how inadequate human language is when it tries to make them sensible. Besides colour-imaginations you will also have thermal, gustatory, olfactory, and still other imaginations for which human language contains not even approximate words. You will, however, lack imaginations comparable with impressions of sound. The astral plane is mute and silent despite all its extraordinary richness of colours, lights, fragrances, and so forth.

With time, form will be added to this colourfulness of astral impressions. In addition to colours, imaginations will acquire certain outlines and contours, although by no means fixed ones. The characteristic of the astral world is precisely its “fluidity”, its continual change of shapes and forms.

Nothing there is fixed, nothing congealed. Every being, every object continually changes shape; hence it is even difficult to speak of a difference between beings and objects, difficult to divide them into living and dead. There everything lives, everything moves, everything changes form. It is truly a “hall of learning” for you. And truly “beneath every flower a serpent lurks”, because a form apparently pleasant and graceful can immediately change into an ugly and threatening one. A low desire may assume an apparently innocent form, and only the shade of its colour and its turbidity can warn you. You will gain understanding of this astral world, so unlike our earthly one, only on the later stages. Here study it, learn to know it, but do not yet judge. Above all, do not lose the solid ground beneath your feet in the physical world. Here on earth you have manifestations proceeding from objects or beings, while through dharana you receive manifestations apparently connected with no object. All the more necessary to you here, therefore, are sound judgment and logic in thinking, lest you fall into the temptation of uncontrolled fantasy unsupported by anything real.

That is why the strictest possible control of your thoughts and feelings, which you were to acquire during preparation, is so indispensable. Skill in pratyahara is equally indispensable, so that during exercises in imagination no unwanted impressions disturb your concentration. You must now direct the feelings and thoughts you have already mastered onto wholly new paths, previously unknown to you; you must use them to develop entirely new capacities of the soul. For this you must have as much strength as possible and concentrate it

all together in one direction, without scattering it in struggles with intrusive thoughts or unwanted impressions. You are beginning to understand, and with further exercises will understand ever more clearly, how necessary is the exact cultivation of the preparatory stages if you wish successfully to ascend to the higher ones.

I shall now give you another exercise indicated by Dr Steiner (C), extraordinarily fruitful in the practice of dharana: "Place before you any seed of a plant... Observe carefully the shape of the seed, its colour and other characteristics. Then consider that from this seed an articulated plant will arise when it is planted in the earth. Make this plant present to yourself, reconstruct it in imagination. And then think: What I now represent to myself in imagination will one day actually be brought forth from this little seed by the forces of earth and sun. If I had before me an artificially made grain, exactly imitating this seed and indistinguishable from the real one, the forces of sun and earth could not bring anything forth from it. When you have formed this thought as distinctly as possible and experienced it inwardly, you will be able to form, together with the corresponding feeling, the following thought: In a hidden way there already lies within the seed — as the capacity of the whole plant — that which will later grow from it.

"In the artificial imitation there is no such capacity. Yet to your eyes the two grains are alike. In the genuine seed, therefore, there is something invisible which is absent from the imitation. Now concentrate thought and feeling upon this invisible element. Become conscious that this invisible element will later change into the visible plant, with forms and colours. Experience within yourself the thought: the invisible will become visible. If you could not think, you would be unable to represent beforehand what will become visible only later. What you think through you must at the same time feel as vividly as possible... and repeat the exercises until these thoughts and feelings have, as it were, grown into your soul. Through them you will develop within yourself a new faculty which will open a new imagination to you. You will perceive that the seed is covered as though by a luminous cloud. In your soul you will experience it as a kind of flame. The centre of the flame will give you an impression similar to that which you experience from lilac colour, while the edges of the flame will be felt as bluish. Something now appears to you which you did not see before. It has been produced by the faculty you awakened in yourself through the forces of feeling and thought."

When in this exercise you reach the result described, undertake the next, closely connected with the preceding: "Stand before a fully developed plant (C). Observe it and then surrender yourself to the thought that a time will come when this plant will die. Nothing will remain of what you now see upon it. But then the plant will produce seeds which later will again become plants. You notice once more that within what you see something hidden is present which you do not perceive. Immerse yourself completely in the thought that this plant-form with its colours will cease to exist in the future. But the conception of the seed teaches you that it will not disappear into nothingness. And that which will preserve it from nothingness is just as invisible to your eyes as formerly the plant within the seed was invisible to you. Thus there is within it something which your eyes cannot see. When this thought lives in you and

you unite it with the corresponding feelings, after a time it will again develop in you a new perception. From the plant there will grow once more a kind of supersensible flame. It will of course be a flame of different dimensions from the little flame above the seed. You will experience it as bluish-green in the centre and yellowish-red at the edges."

Naturally, for such exercises you must have before you an actual seed or plant; merely imagining them is not enough. That would be fantasy detached from reality, while in esoteric knowledge the aim is not that you should arbitrarily create imaginations in your soul, but that external reality should evoke them in you. Those coloured flames surrounding seeds and plants are not non-existent things which you merely imagine.

Every esoteric disciple sees them in the same way, in the same form and colour for a given plant, provided only that he is truly able to see them. If everyone described differently what he saw although all observed the same plant, you would have good reason to call such visions hallucinations or auto-suggestions. But this is not so. At later stages, when the time comes to learn the "occult script", you will notice that these coloured flames belong, as it were, to the letters of that script and must therefore possess a fixed form if they are to be understood by all initiates.

When the exercises already described succeed, you may pass to the next ones, whose subject will be supplied by an animal or a human being. Apply all your skill in pratyahara in order to observe as attentively as possible a person or animal at the moment when he — or it — intensely desires something. Direct attention to the desire itself, not to the desiring being nor to the desired object. When this desire reaches its greatest intensity — without certainty of satisfaction — try to preserve the greatest possible inner calm and surrender yourself entirely to the impression which this other being's desire makes upon your soul. Calm is necessary so that you yourself do not awaken a similar desire within you; you are to be only an attentive but indifferent witness. There will then appear in your soul an entirely new feeling, like a single wave on the calm surface of a lake. Dr Steiner (C) compares this feeling with a small cloud appearing on the horizon of a clear sky. This feeling, often repeated, will likewise lead you to a certain wholly new imagination. There will appear in your soul the impression of something luminous and coloured, as though a flame, yellow-red in the centre and lilac at the edges. This will be the astral embodiment of the desire which you are observing. Perhaps you already had flashes of such an imagination during your preparation. Looking at a person known to have a pale complexion, you received — apparently without reason — the impression that the colour of his face varied from orange to violet, and this at the moment when the person intensely desired something.

Complete this exercise by observing in the same way a person who has just attained the fulfilment of his desire. The imagination to which such an exercise leads will give you the impression of a yellow flame with greenish edges. In both exercises you will notice that the form of the flame and its colour are independent of the individuality of the person or animal; in everyone you will observe the same flame and the same colours. The size of the flame, however — although difficult to determine — depends upon the intensity of the desire, as does the saturation of its colours. The brilliance of those colours corresponds to

the quality of the desire. Purely sensual impulses have muddy, opaque colours; less material desires shine with purer colours.

Naturally, such observations of people must never become for you a motive for criticising or despising them. Still less may you ever reveal to anyone what desires you perceived in him or in someone else. For you these are to be purely scientific experiences, from which you are not permitted to draw conclusions unfavourable to the person observed. Do not even dare to mention to him that you noticed anything whatever, and in daily life forget what you observed. What matters is not whom you observed it in, but what you observed. Do not forget either that what I have called a "flame" merely produces an impression similar to that which a physical flame gives to the eye; there is therefore nothing analogous, for example, to a sensation of heat. You already know that the feeling of spiritual warmth and cold means something entirely different from desire; it gives you rather an indication of the moral level in relation to your own level.

Likewise beware of dryness and seemingly "scientific" indifference toward other objects of your observation. Looking at plants for the development of imagination should not diminish your love of Nature, nor make you incapable of feelings of admiration for animals, plants, minerals, and so forth. On the contrary, cultivate and develop within yourself with special care a love of Nature, and then she will reveal her mysteries to you. "Only that which you love will reveal itself to you": you will verify this axiom of esoteric knowledge through your own experience on every stage of the Path. And you should love everything: not only people and living beings, but also phenomena of nature, works of art, beautiful thoughts and lofty feelings. Already on the next stage you will notice that thoughts can be loved, and that without such love you will achieve nothing. Whatever you do not love, whatever you close yourself against and repel, closes itself against you and avoids you in return. It is immaterial whether that something is a stone, rain, a fly, or a human being.

XIV. Dhyana
(Meditation)

On the stage of dharana you became acquainted with exercises in concentration leading to pictorial, imaginative vision. You developed the ability to receive conscious impressions from the astral plane. Now you proceed to exercises which in a similar way will open before you the mental plane.

To enter the astral plane you needed to concentrate the most vivid possible feeling upon the object of your attention, for that plane, as you know, is the world of feelings, desires and impulses. Now you are to gain entrance into the mental world, and must therefore develop the forces of your mental body in the same way as in dharana you developed the forces of the astral body. Do not suppose, however, that because you are an intelligent and cultivated person you therefore already possess a well-developed mental body. On the preparatory stages you had an opportunity to discover how clumsily until then you controlled your mental body, and on those very stages you underwent exercises designed to make that body an instrument obedient to your will and functioning without fault.

In dhyana it will become evident whether this instrument truly functions without fault. If there are still any defects or weaknesses in it, all the exercises of dhyana will be fruitless for you. They will lead you to no results, or at most to results quite different from those intended. For ordinary ability to think sensibly and logically is not enough here. You must not only know how to think, but also how to observe attentively the processes of thinking themselves. Above all, you must know how to form living thoughts, full of content and force, for only such thoughts can awaken and develop new faculties in your mental body. Until now your thoughts depended to a considerable degree upon feelings, and feelings also supplied motives for the action of your will. Thought, feeling and will were linked causally with one another. Now, however, they are to separate and become independent, so that each of these forces may act independently of the others. In dhyana feeling and will provide the fertile ground from which your thought will develop the faculty of inspirational connection.

You will now begin to understand the meaning of what you may already have heard more than once concerning the so-called “splitting of the personality” before initiation. These three powers of your being — thought, feeling and will — which in a certain normal manner are inseparably connected with one another, constitute the unity of the human being. A person is considered normal when thought, feeling and will are united in one. You say of yourself: “I feel, I think, I will”, thereby expressing that in all three cases you, the same you, are the subject.

You would be regarded as abnormal if you desired unpleasant things or acted otherwise than logical reasoning indicated. In initiation, however, you will reach the point at which these three powers of your being loosen their mutual connection. You will no longer have the impression that it is you who think, but that "something thinks" within you. Similarly, in relation to feelings you will have the impression: "something feels within me", and in relation to manifestations of will: "something wills within me". Your unified "I" will split into three distinct "I's"; one "I" will think, another will feel, and the third will manifest will.

To reach this, you must undergo the exercises of dharana, dhyana and samadhi, which develop the independence of the three powers of your being. Above all, however, you must bring these three powers into the most complete harmony. Your feelings should never resist where your thought has judged that sympathy is called for; will must never incline you to an action inconsistent with thought or feeling. Without such harmonisation, one of these three powers might gain predominance over the others, and then you would truly become an abnormal person, of the kind you have probably met more than once in life. There are people in whom an overgrown will kills thought and feeling; others in whom dryness of heart and atrophy of will go together with the unchecked growth of intellect; and finally there are those helpless in life who are guided solely by feelings and impulses. Similar dangers would threaten you if you did not harmonise these three powers of your being as perfectly as possible before they acquired independence.

You therefore understand that such harmonisation of the powers of feeling, will and thought is necessary before you attain initiation. It is needed also for another purpose. The harmonious development of these three powers likewise develops harmoniously the second half of your six-petalled lotus, and you already know that before initiation all the padmas must be fully developed and functioning normally. You know too that, as with the other padmas, in the six-petalled lotus half the petals have long been unconsciously active, while you are to awaken and develop the other three petals. It will therefore likewise be clear to you that, as with the other padmas, the development of the six-petalled lotus depends not upon physical means but upon building appropriate qualities into your invisible bodies.

One such quality is a sense for truth. This is of course not a physical organ but an inner one. Your sensitivity to everything true and right must increase to a degree of which until now you have had no conception. This sense of truth must become so vivid that everything false or erroneous immediately causes you a distinct feeling of unpleasantness, even almost physical pain.

As the opposite pole to this sense of truth, cultivate within yourself the greatest possible forbearance toward human errors in speech and conduct. Never permit yourself to feel aversion toward a person who lies consciously or, in ignorance, repeats a false opinion. "Happy is he whom truth teaches, not through signs and words that pass away, but by itself, showing itself to him as it is in itself," says Thomas à Kempis (E), and elsewhere: "We usually judge a thing according as it pleases our heart, for self-love easily deprives us of right judgment."

While developing within yourself a sense for truth together with tolerance for human error, you are at the same time working to strengthen the certainty of your judgments and the speed of decision. Your new faculty of feeling strengthens the will, helping you to resolve decisively any doubts about how to act. The third direction of your work aims at cultivating the faculty of thought, and for this you need genuinely serious study. Besides this reading, which develops your powers of thought excellently, it is indispensable that you immerse yourself in the various branches of esoteric knowledge. Alongside the sacred books of various ancient peoples, the works of modern occultists will be useful here, such as Blavatsky, Sinnett, Olcott, Hartmann, Besant, Leadbeater, Collins, Steiner, even Papus, Aksakow, De Rochas and others. Your sense of truth will help you separate truth from its often unassuming or bizarre shell; it will also warn you against the fantasies of authors, whether unconscious or deliberate.

All this in dhyana is work preparing the ground for the proper exercises of meditation. You will find an inexhaustible abundance of subjects for reflection, or meditation, in the books I have mentioned; in addition there are subjects of meditation producing strictly definite consequences. Before approaching these, however, acquire a certain technical proficiency in the actual manner of conducting such reflections, taking as subjects passages from the books you study. You will find more detailed instructions in the next chapter; there I shall give you several subjects of meditation producing precisely determined consequences. Here I shall draw your attention once more to maintaining a certain constant manner of relating yourself to the phenomena and events of life.

That sense of truth which you are to cultivate within yourself you already began to awaken during the preparation.

You will remember without difficulty that on the stage of niyama you worked upon the “fourfold qualification”, and the first element in it was discrimination between transient and eternal things, between truth and supposition. At that time you learned this rather with the intellect, the external mind; now you are to cultivate within yourself an inner sense for truth. By cultivating the development of this sense for truth, you will also be able fruitfully to carry out meditations on the proper valuation of transient things in relation to eternal ones and vice versa. You will learn not to overvalue temporal things, but at the same time you will learn not to undervalue their significance in relation to eternal things. Goethe’s familiar sentence, “Everything transient is only a symbol”, will provide here a very fruitful subject for meditation.

Thus in dhyana you continue the work begun already in niyama. The sense of truth and the appropriate valuation of temporal things in relation to eternal ones are the first two of those “four qualifications”. The third is, as you know, the “sixfold qualification”, which you likewise had to practise in niyama. You also know that the “fourfold qualification” awakens from sleep four petals of the eight-petalled padma; on the stage of dhyana you therefore already have three of them awakened and moving. There remains only the fourth petal to awaken, which is the “desire for liberation”, or “desire for salvation”, if you prefer so to call it. This desire will gradually awaken within you under the

influence of meditations upon definite subjects, but will reach full bloom only on the stage of samadhi.

Before entering that stage, you have much work before you in the practice of dhyana. Cultivating the sense for truth will give you ever greater skill in distinguishing eternal things from temporal ones, because only the eternal are true. Temporal things are appearance, illusion, phantom, maya (the Polish word *majak*, phantom, comes from the Sanskrit *maya*, illusion). You will gradually perceive that among the eternal you can include only potential faculties and possibilities, but nothing that already exists. An extraordinarily good deed ceases to be something eternal at the very moment when you perform it. It becomes temporal, passing and perishable. Eternal, however, is your faculty for doing good. Everything you learn, everything you assimilate into the mind, even if these are things extraordinarily difficult to comprehend, is not eternal, because you will lose all these intellectual acquisitions together with your mental body when you leave devachan; eternal, on the other hand, because it constitutes your lasting acquisition, is the capacity to understand such difficult things, the capacity to learn and assimilate them. All material things are still more transient and passing. Even feelings themselves are by no means eternal, nor are the external consequences of those feelings. Only the capacity for feeling is eternal, because when you develop it within yourself it remains your lasting acquisition throughout all subsequent incarnations. Reflecting upon this, you will come to understand that this does not apply indiscriminately to every feeling.

Only the capacities for those feelings which you yourself develop through conscious work are eternal. You received lower feelings ready-made as an inheritance from the bodies, and your work is precisely to replace them with higher ones. And that from which you are to purify yourself cannot be eternal, because that would contradict the law of progress.

You will now be able to assess transient things correctly in relation to eternal ones. Sufferings in themselves are transient and passing, but they have value as a means of building patience and perseverance into your bodies. Social position can likewise have value only as a means, because when a larger sphere of authority is placed in your hands, you have greater opportunity to do good and support progress. Fame and honours, on the other hand, are by no means eternal and in addition are at least worthless, if not harmful. They can easily awaken pride and an exaggerated opinion of one's own value, and moreover stand in the way of fulfilling other duties, perhaps less honourable but more fruitful. Wealth likewise has no value, because it brings an increase in the burdens of life and draws attention away from the proper road. The health of the physical body has no value in itself; it is needed only so that you may use the body as an instrument functioning without fault. Think in turn about the various temporal goods for which people strive with such effort, and you will perceive that none of them possesses value in itself. At most they have indirect value as means to other ends; more often, however, they are merely ballast dragging one down to a lower level or hindering one's ascent.

Such reflections upon temporal goods and their value will give you very valuable preparation for meditation proper. In such reflections you will see how erroneous and superficial your former judgments were in this valuation of

worth, and in addition you will notice something incomparably more important. You will arrive at entirely new conceptions of the things among which you live; you will begin to look at them in a completely different way. And these new conceptions you will form yourself; you will be their creator. You will reach them through reflections for which — apart from the object itself — you take nothing from outside, nothing from another person, but draw everything exclusively from within yourself. You build these new conceptions from your own materials; you are therefore their sole and only creator. No one helps you in this; you create everything by your own forces. And these forces are given to you precisely by meditation. In it you do without all external impressions; you work only with inner forces. Even external stimuli were not needed here; nothing prompted you to reflect upon these things, but you undertook it yourself by an act of will within you.

By setting these inner forces into motion you establish ever more frequent and ever closer contact with your higher self.

What you learn in meditation — these new concepts, new judgments and new valuations — you receive precisely from it. Your reason and your physical brain do not give them to you; your higher self does. And you know that it already belongs to the arupa plane, to worlds not limited by forms. What it knows there is the common possession of all beings of that plane, because there are no individual boundaries there. It may be the knowledge of outstanding people on earth, or the knowledge of purely spiritual beings. There are no authors there, no owners. The knowledge which you draw from there through your higher self belongs to no one and to all; it is inspirational. By paths of which they themselves are unconscious, poets, musicians, painters and sculptors receive their inspirations; you receive them consciously by practising meditative exercises.

I shall show you how meditation is carried out by means of an example whose subject is supplied by the sentence (F): “Before the eye can see, it must become incapable of tears.” First try to feel as vividly as possible the content of each of these words in succession, and then reflect more or less in this way: “The eye is the organ of sight. In the physical world I see objects with it regardless of whether there are tears in it or whether it is clear. But tears, although they are a strictly physical manifestation, have their cause in the astral body. One may weep from anger, grief, and equally from joy or compassion. But the particular mood of the soul colours for me what I look at with the physical eye. In joy everything seems to me more beautiful and pleasant than in depression. Thus feelings influence even physical seeing. If therefore I am to see clearly, without personal colouring, I must calm my feelings; I must ‘become incapable of tears’. My initial judgment that the eye sees in the same way regardless of tears was wrong. If I had already developed the sense for truth within myself, I would have felt at once that this first opinion was mistaken. But if feelings influence even physical vision, the influence of my astral body will be still stronger when astral vision is concerned. In imaginations, therefore, the colour-tone of the pictures is closely connected with my personal feelings. I must not only literally but also figuratively ‘become incapable of tears’ in order to look soberly, without personal colouring, upon phenomena whether physical or astral. It is not enough for me here to master the astral body so that in lively

feelings it does not bring tears to my eyes; I must control it so completely that without my will no feeling whatever, even the faintest, arises in it. Egoistic feelings most easily bring tears, and I already tried in niyama to cleanse my astral body of such feelings. Now I must have this body so completely under my control that it feels only what I allow it to feel and only when I allow it. This is simply pratyahara in feeling. When I succeed in this, only then will my astral vision be clear and undisturbed by personal colouring."

I have given you only one path of thought, but you will easily understand that the same subject, "Before the eye can see...", may lead to different paths of thought and that on each of them you can conduct a fruitful meditation. Notice now how much new knowledge you have gained through meditation on these few simple words. Even if you knew nothing at all of niyama or pratyahara, from this meditation alone you would have learned that you must cleanse yourself of egoism and master your feelings. You have also understood that complete mastery of feeling is necessary here, not merely partial mastery. Since you already know the method of imaginative exercises, apply it precisely to this mastery of feelings. Imagine as vividly as possible that an acquaintance of yours of rather low ethical level meets you and accuses you of some very base, even criminal, actions. You try to deny them, but he heaps ever new slanders upon you, then insults you, and finally assaults you physically. Try to imagine this incident as vividly as possible — but at the same time forbid yourself every feeling. During this imagination let there arise in your soul not a shadow of a sense of injury or unpleasantness, nor a tremor of indignation or anger. Only then will you have the astral body completely under your control.

XV. Inspiration
(Inner Inspiration)

Through dharana you developed within yourself the faculty of imaginative perception. You experienced your first coloured visions which did not proceed from any visible object. The number of such experiences increased; you gathered enough of them to begin dividing these colour-phenomena into turbid, luminous and sparkling ones, and you began to realise that they are manifestations of beings of different levels. If you patiently refrained from all attempts to guess what sort of beings they might be, you formed no premature judgment about their nature, and now the practice of dhyana will enable you gradually to form a more correct judgment. You know that dhyana leads through meditation to inspiration, and inspiration is the stage at which it becomes possible to understand the so-called "occult script". Your imaginative pictures were like separate letters of this script. They did not influence one another and were not mutually dependent; but you need to place a series of such imaginative pictures side by side so that together, like the letters of a written word, they form something that speaks and has meaning.

You gain understanding of this meaning precisely through inspiration. You read that occult script which, in imagination, you had looked upon as a letter written in an unknown language, although you knew its individual characters. If you practised dhyana well, the meditation on "Before the eye can see..." has already taught you something extraordinarily important. It gave you the conception that what you saw in imaginations you did not see as it really is, because you coloured it with your own moods and feelings. You looked at those colour-phenomena not directly, but through your own coloured spectacles. If another esoteric disciple looked at the same thing, he would see it differently from you, because he would be looking through his own spectacles. Thus what you perceive at the beginning of your entry into the astral world, and what you take for objects or beings of that world, is in fact such only to a very small extent. Most often and most easily you perceive what you yourself have thrown into that world by your feelings, moods or desires. What you perceive there first of all is yourself; at the entrance to the astral world you first perceive yourself.

You know that the concept of distance is entirely different in the astral world from what it is in the physical. There, what is foreign to you, with which you have little or no connection, is far away; what is akin to you, linked to you by similarity or interest, is near. That is why you perceive there first of all yourself, because you are of course nearest to yourself. In the physical world too you look at yourself and regard yourself as near to yourself.

But everything of which you say “I” you count as belonging to your interior. When you say “I feel, I desire”, you regard that desire or feeling as something contained within you. You do not see it outside; it does not come toward you, but comes from within you. In the astral world, on the contrary, these feelings and moods of your own which you perceive there in imaginations you see outside yourself, as something objective existing beyond you. You must gradually accustom yourself to the fact that what you see there as objective phenomena is your own interior; you must become accustomed to looking at yourself as if you were an external object observed by another person.

Thus you are already beginning to spell out the occult script. You know some of its letters and try to combine them into words. In imagination you look at the colours floating freely in the space around you and begin to read them: “I, my interior.” You also begin little by little to understand how this script is to be read, how from its letters one reaches an understanding of the content of the word. You do not read them directly and literally: “red, blue”, but symbolically, figuratively.

At first you feel something like disappointment on discovering that this “script” is read symbolically. Perhaps it had seemed to you that in the supersensible worlds everything should be as rigid and sharply delimited as in the material world, where you have black letters on white paper, accessible to everyone who has learned them. But this symbolic character of the astral or mental world is no less exact than earthly letters. In the astral world feeling is colour, and in the mental world every thought is a shape, a figure. Colour is not merely a symbol for feeling, nor is a figure a symbol of thought; it is the thought itself. It is only you who make these things into symbols, because you still think in earthly fashion and cannot yet accustom yourself to the fact that feeling is colour and thought is form. Later, when you grow into these worlds and begin to orient yourself in them, this symbolic character will become something so extraordinarily clear and exact that even the clearest earthly signs will seem uncertain and ambiguous.

As your knowledge of the letters increases, that is, as your imaginative visions multiply, you will gradually begin to observe differences among these astral phenomena. Besides differences in the brightness of colours and shapes, you will notice that some of them change under your influence while others are independent of it. Sometimes a particularly beautiful colour or a symmetrical and harmonious figure will appear to you. The moment you feel admiration for it, the colour or shape will change in the twinkling of an eye. The greater part of these phenomena, however, will remain unchanged under the influence of your feelings and thoughts, at most disappearing immediately.

Later you will become convinced that precisely all those phenomena which you cannot change are yourself and proceed from your interior; whereas those which yield to your influence, at first very few, are expressions of beings distinct from you. This observation will be another step forward in your study of the occult script. Before you reach this, you must — as I have said — grow, as it were, into the symbolic character of the astral world. You must be able to use symbols as confidently and unwaveringly as in ordinary life you use numbers or letters. You must find this symbolism everywhere, in every earthly phenomenon, and then you will understand the full truth of the sentence that

"everything transient is only a symbol". To grow into this symbolism you will need special meditative exercises, which you may devise for yourself after the pattern, for example, of the following one indicated by Dr Steiner (I, 323): "Represent as vividly as possible a plant rooted in the earth, then gradually unfolding leaves and finally flowers. Beside it represent a human being. Try to feel as strongly as possible how much more perfect man's qualities are than those of the plant. He can move freely according to his feelings and his will, while the plant is fastened to the earth. But precisely what the plant lacks makes it in a certain respect more perfect than man. He acts under the influence of desires and therefore errs; the plant obeys only the pure laws of growth and opens its calyx without desire to the innocent rays of the sun. Man rises above the plant by a certain further development, inasmuch as desire, impulse and passion are added to the innocent forces of the plant. Now represent to yourself the green sap circulating in the plant as the expression of its passionless laws of growth, and beside it the red blood circulating in the veins of man as the expression of his desires and impulses. To these living thoughts add further thoughts about man's possibility of development by purifying his impulses and desires through higher capacities of soul. Thereby the baseness of those impulses disappears; they are reborn on a higher level. Red blood may still remain the expression of such purified and spiritualised impulses. In the rose, the green sap of the plant has changed into the red colour of the flower, and that flower follows the pure laws of growth just as does the green leaf. The red of the rose may be a symbol of that blood which expresses impulses purified after the rejection of everything base. Such blood is as pure as the forces acting in the red rose. These thoughts must not only work vividly in the mind but also awaken feelings of admiration for the purity and passionlessness of the plant. From this will arise the understanding that a certain higher perfection must be purchased by receiving desires and impulses." You possess an organism more highly developed than the plant, you have freedom of movement and sense-organs, but in return you also have impulses and desires. Admiration for the innocence of the plant leads you here to a serious mood at the thought of this price paid for perfection in desires.

But you have the possibility of freeing yourself from these low impulses; by your own will you can purify and ennoble yourself almost to the degree of the plant. This hope of liberation awakens the joyful thought of blood as pure in its redness as the redness of the rose is pure, for such ennobled blood will make possible inner experiences as undisturbed by any low desire as is the life of the plant.

It is by no means the objects which you choose as the content of meditation that matter, for you may choose such objects freely. The task consists in experiencing as vividly as possible in meditation what you are thinking about, so that feelings accompany the thoughts. Only the vibrations of feeling, often repeated, will awaken and develop in your soul a new force, a new inner faculty through which symbols will be as real and as clear to you as letters or numbers have hitherto been. The green of plant sap, as a symbol of passionless existence, will tell you the same sort of thing as the red of human blood as an expression of desires and impulses; it will tell you that colour itself — green or red — already expresses something definite. The external object is not what matters

here, but the colour; you know, moreover, that in the astral world colours are objects and objects are colours.

Through such immersion in symbols you will reach ever greater proficiency in reading the occult script. From what you have learned so far you can already read more than one thing. When blood-red appears in an imagination, you will read it as desire; and if, under the influence of your aversion to this colour — not a beautiful one, after all — it does not change its shade, you will read it as your own desire. You will say to yourself: "this is what my desire looks like", and you will realise that it must be strong since it made an impression upon your astral senses, still very unskilled in perceiving phenomena. This will be a rather unexpected discovery, because you probably supposed that you had already completely rooted out low desires of this kind. But this blood-red which does not change under your influence stands before you like a clear inscription telling you that you did not uproot the desire within yourself but only suppressed it and hid it at the very bottom of the soul. In the astral world it has come to light, just as your whole interior comes to light there; you have seen it before you and felt something like horror. A symbol, such a simple, uncomplicated symbol, with one flash of red has told you more, and more clearly, than an entire sentence. It has told you unambiguously: "You judged yourself wrongly, for you considered yourself purified of sensual desires, and here you see how distinctly those desires stand before your astral sight."

Think carefully about what you have just read, and you will begin to become convinced how extraordinarily clearly symbols speak when one knows how to read them. Beware, however, of seeking symbols where there are none, that is, beware of taking every colour impression for an imagination. If you overfatigue the physical eye, blood-coloured spots will float before it in space, but this will not be an imagination, only congestion of the visual organ.

If you look for a long time at brilliant spring green and then turn your gaze to a grey or white object, you will perceive reddish patches upon it. This too will not be an imagination, but a simple physiological phenomenon. Therefore beware carefully of every self-deception and of confusing physical perceptions with astral ones. Imaginations appear suddenly and unexpectedly, and disappear as rapidly as they arose. You cannot evoke them at will, hold them, or repeat them. Only after long years will you gradually begin to discover methods by which you can at will — that is, whenever you choose — receive imaginative impressions, or consciously look into the astral world.

Meanwhile continue to practise meditation. You may choose subjects freely, but naturally the higher the content of your subject, the higher it will raise you and the higher the faculties it will awaken in your soul. You already know that purely intellectual meditations without the participation of feeling will be comparatively ineffective. If you practised only such meditations, you would develop only the powers of the mental body, and would develop them one-sidedly. And you know that you must also develop feeling and will harmoniously, that is, the astral and etheric bodies. Therefore you should choose meditations in such a way that the most vivid possible feelings can accompany them and that they awaken manifestations of will within you. You may practise one and the same meditation once by directing it toward feeling and another time by directing it toward will. The example of meditation on plant and man will

serve equally well for awakening feeling and for awakening will. The red of the rose, as a symbol of purified human blood, can awaken within you the will to purify your own blood precisely in this way, so that it is entirely free from the turbid shades of desires and impulses.

The practice of exercises of this kind aims at the same time to loosen the mutual connection of the three powers of your being: thought, feeling and will. When this connection loosens, these powers will be able to act independently, each on its own. Meditations on non-sensory subjects give these powers a new direction; instead of turning them toward external objects, they direct them inward, into the depths of your being. Later you will perceive what a powerful spiritual acquisition such liberated powers are when they are not wasted on sensory objects. With liberated thought-force directed inward you will reach conscious awareness of your higher self. Similarly, when you do not direct the force of your feeling outward in order to express your emotions either by speech or in some other way, but can retain it freely within yourself, only then can it become a supersensible power. The same applies finally to your will. The moment you free it from its connection with thoughts and feelings so that it need not act under their influence, you will be able to retain it within as a higher power acting without the use of physical organs.

XVI. Samadhi

(The Yogi's Trance)

"Somnambulism (K, 218) I should call the emergence of the inner man, or the spiritual waking state of man. Such spiritual waking, however, occurs only at moments when the somnambulist sinks into himself or goes out of himself. Then the spirit is completely free; it can separate itself from soul and body and go wherever it wishes, like a ray of light. Then the somnambulist is certainly incapable of anything ungodly, even though his soul may be more or less unpurified. He certainly cannot then lie or deceive." In this way Mrs Hauffe, a nineteenth-century and therefore modern somnambulist, defines somnambulism; but almost without alteration you may accept this definition as a description of the state of samadhi among the ancient Indians. You may apply to them literally the words that "at such moments the somnambulist sinks into himself or goes out of himself", or, in ordinary language, "loses consciousness" to a greater or lesser degree. Among the Indians samadhi was a state of "holy sleep", a state of complete exclusion of the activity of the physical senses and even of physical life. During the sleep of samadhi the yogi's physical body was in a state of immobility very similar to what modern science calls catalepsy. At their stage of development at that time, the Indians could not attain the kind of mobility which psychology today knows under the name of "active somnambulism". In it a person retains almost complete control over the physical body; he can walk, move, speak, read and work, and nevertheless remain in deep somnambulism. The only external difference between this state and the ordinary waking condition is a certain "narrowing of consciousness", as Ochorowicz characterised it with his customary acuteness.

Such a narrowing of consciousness is already for you a state to which you have become accustomed through exercises. Every concentration of attention upon one object is a narrowing of consciousness, because apart from the object of your attention you see, hear and feel nothing. Therefore samadhi for you will not be magnetic sleep, catalepsy, or any special state into which you would have to introduce yourself or be introduced by another person. You need not fall asleep or enter any trance whatever; you simply disconnect the telephone wires from your senses so that they do not disturb you in meditation or contemplation. Every exercise of yours in dharana and dhyana likewise required a narrowing of consciousness, although not for a moment did you then lapse into unconsciousness. In the same way you will not lose consciousness in your samadhi.

Here you have a very striking example of how fundamentally hatha-yoga differs from modern raja-yoga.

The hatha-yogi of today develops within himself a faculty which a quarter of a century ago was rediscovered and named "statuvolence". This "state dependent on the will" is nothing other than voluntarily putting the body

into anaesthesia or even rigidity. Anaesthesia of the senses replaces for the hatha-yogi what you obtain through pratyahara. When such insensibility reaches the brain, the hatha-yogi falls into trance, and this is his samadhi. In trance he can leave the physical body in the astral body and therefore attain a certain degree of astral clairvoyance, but he does not reach beyond that level. You know, moreover, how clumsy his clairvoyance may be when clouds of thought-forms obscure his horizon and his own feelings colour it. Modern "clairvoyants" who possess the ability to use astral organs either innately or awakened by practices more hypnotic than magnetic reach a similar degree of astral sight. You will understand how little value such visions have when people attain them without all that conscientious work upon themselves which the five preparatory stages comprise, and you will understand that the so-called "training" of clairvoyant mediums by alleged magnetizers is in reality only a distortion of their development.

Your clairvoyance will be of an entirely different kind. All trances, statuvolence and sleep-states would be unnecessary and even harmful to you. You will pass from physical to astral seeing as easily as you transfer your gaze from the book you are reading to the view outside the window. You simply direct attention to something else: in the first case to the physical senses, in the second to the astral. And this turning of attention away from the physical senses and toward the astral or mental senses is samadhi in modern yoga. Outwardly it manifests itself in the already-mentioned "narrowing of consciousness", but in nothing more. There is no bodily paralysis, no insensibility of the physical senses, nothing whatever that could be regarded as even the slightest pathological symptom. During your samadhi you are in full possession of your physical and psychic powers. You do not lose consciousness for a moment, because to the three states of consciousness generally known to people you have added a fourth state, turiya. The three familiar states are ordinary daily waking, in which you are from the moment you awake in the morning until you fall asleep at night; deep sleep, usually ending a few hours after midnight; and light sleep toward morning, from which you preserve memories as your "dreams". The fourth state, turiya, is that in which you are during meditation and contemplation, the state of "superconsciousness".

This is the physiological aspect of your state of samadhi. I have deliberately held your attention upon it somewhat longer so that you may rid yourself of every fear of this state which the Indians called the yogi's "sleep". You know, therefore, that for you it will be neither sleep nor an abnormal state. Now pass to its psychological aspect.

This aspect is precisely turiya, the fourth state of consciousness, rightly called superconsciousness, and still more rightly all-consciousness. For the ancient Indians turiya was superconsciousness because on entering it they lost ordinary consciousness; they simply fell asleep. For you, however, it will be all-consciousness, because on entering turiya you do not lose ordinary consciousness. You are simultaneously in the state of waking, sleep and superconsciousness. Even the ecstasy of Christian mystics in the Middle Ages, although similar in character to turiya, was a state in which they lost ordinary consciousness. Falling into rapture, they saw and heard nothing that happened around them — not because they did not wish to see and hear, but because they could not. I told you that they consciously developed only one of their lotus flowers and through it could enter ecstasy, but were unable to preserve

contact with the physical senses. You, however, are developing all the padmas, in the astral as well as in the etheric body, and therefore during turiya you will be able to preserve connection with the physical body.

Even in cases when you leave the physical body, you will not leave that body in lethargy or catalepsy. During samadhi the hatha-yogi must put it into lethargy or deep sleep, because he leaves it in the astral body and even with part of the etheric. In the physical body life is then sustained only by a portion of the etheric body; it is therefore a very suppressed, almost vegetable life. You, on the other hand, when leaving the body, take with you only the mental body and leave with the physical body the entire etheric and astral bodies. And these are precisely the bodies which the average person has developed more or less and uses most. Therefore, when you leave in the mental body, you will appear unchanged to those around you. You will be able to move, look, hear, speak and feel as before; no one around you will notice any change. And yet with your mental body you will be "far away". You will turn the attention of your higher self away from external things, but the lower self will remain in your physical body together with the etheric and astral, because those three bodies precisely compose it. To the people around you, you will seem just like them, because they regard as their "I" precisely their lower self, that is, those three bodies.

You have therefore understood that your samadhi will be no abnormal state capable of arousing in you anxiety about your health or in others fear that you have lost your senses. Naturally, you will not seek human company for samadhi, but will practise it in silence and solitude. On higher stages you will learn to control your etheric body to such an extent that not only will you consciously direct its currents flowing within the physical body, but you will also be able voluntarily to project portions of the etheric body outward beyond the limits of the physical body. And then too you will preserve full consciousness of mind, because you will project only those portions of the etheric body which you do not need at that moment in the physical body.

And which portions you do not need, and when you do not need them, you will be able to discern consciously. Thus it will be nothing resembling manifestations of mediumship. An example may be taken from the life of Blavatsky, who, wishing to convince a sceptic of the possibility of projecting the etheric body while retaining full consciousness, stood at some distance from him and then with her etheric body knocked sharply against the sceptic's teeth from inside his mouth. Naturally this did not convince him, for the sceptic, terrified at the first moment by so irrefutable a proof, denied everything the next day, claiming that he had evidently fallen victim to a hallucination. For you, however, his denial will be understandable as fear of recognising a fact which would not fit into his mind. It will also be a warning to you that, once you acquire a similar faculty, you should not be tempted to "convince" anyone of it, for you will convince nobody and only expose yourself to ridicule. When people are unable to comprehend something, they prefer to deny it rather than change long-rooted conceptions.

In order consciously to control the currents of the etheric body, you must have its organs developed, and also the organs of the astral body, because the impulses of your will, as a rule, pass from above downward, that is, from the mental body through the astral to the etheric. All your padmas must therefore be active, must revolve and shine. On the stage of dhyana you worked, among

other things, upon the development of the eight-petalled padma, but you did not yet bring it to full bloom. And upon it depend to a large degree those currents in the etheric body. The development of the first petal of this padma consists in distinguishing appearance from the essence of things, opinion from truth, in other words what is transient from what has lasting significance. When you assimilate this manner of discrimination so completely that it becomes, as it were, your habit, a trait of your character, you will create within your head a centre for those etheric currents which you are to direct consciously. The meditative exercises you have practised so far make it possible to move this centre somewhat downward and inward into the head, toward the sixteen-petalled lotus.

The proper valuation of transient things in relation to true things strengthens that centre of etheric currents in the sixteen-petalled padma and moreover exerts a significant transforming influence upon your whole etheric body. Until now this body was, as it were, unprotected from outside; etheric currents from the surroundings entered it freely and escaped your awareness. Now, however, your own currents, which you yourself direct, branch over the surface of the etheric body and interweave ever more densely, forming a kind of delicate net. When therefore external currents coming from the surroundings touch your etheric body, they can no longer penetrate it unnoticed by you.

They encounter this subtle net which you yourself have formed and set it into vibration just as light sets the retina of the eye into vibration, and in this way they reach your consciousness. You acquire the ability to feel these external currents, that is, the ability to receive etheric impressions from your surroundings. The third petal of the eight-petalled padma could develop thanks to the "sixfold qualification" which you began to practise in niyama, and that qualification awakened from sleep the twelve-petalled padma near the heart. The task now is to move the centre of currents still farther downward for which you prepared a place in the throat padma. You can move it, however, only when not merely the twelve-petalled but also the eight-petalled padma is fully awakened and mature enough for movement.

Thus the time comes to develop the fourth petal of the eight-petalled lotus. For this purpose you are to cultivate within yourself the "desire for liberation" so strongly that, like the preceding three, it becomes a permanent feature of your character. Only when you cease to look at external things and beings from your narrow personal standpoint will you be liberated from everything that binds you to the characteristics of your personal nature. Your narrow "I" must disappear before the beings and phenomena of the higher worlds if you are to gain access to those worlds. Without this you would look at those beings and phenomena through the coloured spectacles of your personality and carry there the hard boundaries of your "I", from which those beings would rebound, unable to enter your inner being. Likewise you could not enter into them with your being, because the impenetrable surface of your personality would resist you and you would be unable to pass beyond it.

Naturally, this liberation from looking at everything from a personal standpoint has nothing whatever to do with any, even the slightest, suppression of the sense of the personal "I". You must preserve this sense and even strengthen it carefully, for you know that in the higher worlds there are no boundaries as strict as in the physical world separating "I" from "not-I". It is one thing to possess a strong sense of one's own self, and another to be able to feel the

self of another; you must learn to reconcile both. The sense of your own self protects you from falling into unconsciousness during meditation practised with the astral or etheric body. In ordinary life you have become accustomed to thinking with the brain, and probably during your first attempts at meditation you already had occasion to notice how easily you lose the sense of yourself when your thinking is to rise above the brain, when you leave it aside as an instrument temporarily unused. Perhaps you even fell asleep then, because you simply entered the same conditions as when falling asleep: consciousness is lost at the moment when the brain is excluded from activity. Now you already know how to think without the physical brain, but perhaps you still do not know how to preserve awareness of yourself even when you are not thinking at all, either with or without the brain.

If you carefully observed your experiences during meditative exercises, you may have noticed a rather unpleasant impression which is felt at first. It is a feeling of emptiness, almost of nothingness, accompanied by a feeling of disappointment. You enter the supersensible world, of which you have involuntarily formed an image as something extraordinarily exalted, bright, full of life and movement. You enter it, and complete darkness and emptiness surround you. You encounter nothing there, receive no impressions, do not even feel yourself. You find yourself disappointed, your expectations unfulfilled, and you even feel afraid of this icy emptiness. You are afraid to enter it, to plunge into it with the one thing you have retained in consciousness: the sense of yourself. Yet you must preserve it, because at first in this world you encounter nothing else except this sense of yourself, the sense of your existence. But this is only at the beginning. A person blind from birth behaves similarly when an operation enables him to see. At first he is simply afraid of the impressions of light; he closes his eyes and prefers to continue feeling his way rather than entrust himself to his new sense, which he does not yet know how to use. Only gradually does he acquire practice in seeing, and similarly you will only slowly learn and grow into the supersensible worlds and feel increasingly confident and free in them.

You must therefore preserve the sense of yourself and not lose it even for a moment in cases when you meditate not with thought but with feeling or will. And you will be able to preserve this sense all the more surely the better you develop your two-petalled padma. You already know that this padma is situated at the forehead between the eyebrows and that it is also called the lotus of ninety-six petals. It would be a mistake to develop it prematurely, because it would have no application and might even be harmful. You know that the "splitting of personality" into three distinct powers acting independently of one another awaits you. These powers are thought, feeling and will, and the organs which they use are the eye-lotus, throat-lotus and heart-lotus. If therefore you developed too early, for example, the two-petalled padma, your power of thought might gain such predominance over the others that they would no longer be able to develop independently. That is why until now you have worked evenly upon all three powers, that is, upon the three bodies: mental, etheric and astral. The meditations which you have already practised, and those which I shall indicate later, will bring your two-petalled padma to maturity.

XVII. Contemplation
(Spiritual Absorption)

The exercises you practised on the stages of dharana and dhyana have prepared you to conduct meditation in the proper manner. By practising them perseveringly, you have come to see that mere knowledge of the way in which meditation is carried on would not be enough. Besides acquaintance with the "technical" method, so to speak, special forces are needed here, forces which you could not have developed within yourself in everyday life. Without these forces your meditations would remain only ordinary reflections, yielding no illumination beyond what brain-bound thinking can provide. And you already know by what means you have attained these forces within yourself. First of all, they were your own "savings" in feelings, moods and thoughts. You have learned not to think about unnecessary things; not to swing emotionally from joy to outbursts of despair; and to free yourself from impatience, bitterness and pessimism. Thus those stores of energy which you formerly wasted in these directions have remained unused and freely at your disposal. Next you learned to keep silent in thought, feeling and will, and to make them independent of external impressions. In this way you could direct these powers of thought, feeling and will inward instead of sending them outward in response to impressions. Moreover, you brought all three into harmony with one another.

The ordering and purification of the mental body, freeing it from unnecessary thought-forms and training it to create vigorous thought-forms, has given you mastery over that body and its energies. Moreover, you have freed yourself from dependence upon cerebral thinking alone, for you have practised meditations upon subjects inaccessible to the brain. You can now retain the forces of thought within the mental body instead of wasting them in setting the brain into heavy and sluggish vibrations, for it is capable of no others. This surplus of mental force, retained within, now serves you in awakening and developing your two-petalled padma. As an outward sign of this development, before you have yet begun consciously to feel the movement of this padma, a certain change in your power of memory will appear, and at first it may even cause you some anxiety. You will notice that your mechanical memory grows weaker. Details which formerly you could easily fix in memory — names, numbers, verses, musical airs — now vanish from it without a trace. On the other hand, your ability to form new concepts and to retain them in memory alongside older ones increases, provided that you yourself have formed those concepts by your own mental work and have not merely stamped ready-made concepts mechanically upon your memory, read in a book or heard from someone else.

At first this may grieve you, if indeed you are still capable of being grieved by anything at all; but you will soon see that by this change in the properties of memory you lose nothing and gain much. Instead of using other people's

concepts, which you have assimilated only mechanically, you begin increasingly to use concepts of your own, borrowed from no one.

Mastery of the astral body has brought it to a considerable degree of calm. You no longer submit passively to feelings which you do not wish to have, nor do you awaken unnecessary feelings within yourself; you do not respond with feeling to external impressions unless you wish to do so. In this way you retain within yourself an enormous store of emotional energy which formerly you wasted by involuntarily sending it outward. This "retaining of the word" in the soul, as occultists call it, brings your sixteen-petalled padma into bloom, giving it what sun, rain and soil give to a plant. How mighty this energy of the astral body is you will understand when you realise that it is this that makes human speech possible. The first sounds which man in remote ages uttered with his vocal organ expressed only his inner feelings, the state of his astral body. They were the speech of his soul, the expression of what he felt, and consisted entirely of vowels. Only much later did man learn to pronounce consonants, namely when he began to become conscious of his surroundings, that is, when he began to use the senses of the physical body. Then by the sounds of consonants he tried to imitate external phenomena, and, joining them with the inner impressions which those phenomena made upon him, he combined vowels with consonants into compound sounds. Thus arose the syllables of today and from them words, at first monosyllabic and later more complex. In the present day people abuse speech; they use it not to express the impressions made upon them by external events, nor to express the state of the soul, but rather to cover and conceal that state from others. In this way they waste the inner forces which ought to serve to animate the laryngeal padma, and for that reason cannot develop this padma. You, however, already know how to "retain the word in the soul", and through this you will be able to bring your sixteen-petalled lotus into bloom.

The exercises of the stages already passed have likewise purified and transformed your etheric body. You have learned to refrain from all involuntary and superfluous movements, while at the same time you have begun to gain mastery over the etheric currents. Your will, freeing itself more and more from compulsory association with feeling and thought, can become increasingly independent of your bodies and serve ever more perfectly as the instrument of your higher self. Hence you have probably noticed more than once that it is not "you" who want this or that, but that "something" within you wants it.

You notice this at moments when you are in an ordinary mood, when you think in an earthly way and, by old habit, regard your bodies as your "I", although they by no means want what that "something" within you, your higher self, wants. Besides this, you perceive that your will has grown powerful to a degree formerly inaccessible to you. A simple command of the will is enough to make you undertake without delay an action which is difficult and brings you neither pleasure nor the slightest advantage. Your will is now so powerful precisely because you no longer waste it in serving impulses from your surroundings; you do not turn it toward responding to external impressions, nor force it to exert itself in setting gross physical matter in motion, and therefore you can wield it in etheric matter.

You are now beginning to understand more clearly what that splitting of the personality is of which I spoke to you earlier; only compare the difference

between yourself today and yourself seven years ago. At that time you behaved in life much as other people do; that is, thought, feeling and will were connected within you according to a certain pattern implanted by upbringing and adaptation to your surroundings. When you saw an attractive object, it awakened desire in you and you devised means by which you might possess it. In other words, by the impression it made upon your astral body the object set that body into vibration; the mental body connected with it worked out ways of satisfying the desire; and finally the etheric body, likewise connected with the other two, exerted its will upon the physical body and compelled it to act so as to obtain the desired object. Now this is no longer so. An object, however desirable it may be to others, does indeed make an impression upon your senses, but there it ends. The impression may even be stronger upon you than upon others, because your physical senses have become more refined, but this impression awakens — unless you wish it — neither your feeling, nor your thought, nor your will. Through the senses the impression reaches your consciousness, but it impels you to no action; you simply take cognizance of it, like some report from outside with which you will concern yourself only later. You alone decide whether you are to answer that impression and how you are to answer it: by thought, by feeling, or by will. You are free, completely liberated; nothing external compels you to think, to feel or to act. You yourself choose freely whether you are to act and which of these powers you are to use. You may act by thought alone, that is, use the impression made upon you by that object as a subject of meditation. You may act by feeling, that is, awaken in your astral body whatever vibrations you choose — vibrations of admiration for the object, or even vibrations of desire if you consider them necessary. Finally, you may act by will, that is, exert pressure with the etheric body upon the physical body so that it may bring the object to you or give it to someone else, according to your judgment.

Your distinguishing feature now is the independence of your thought, your feelings and your will from external impressions. This is not insensibility, for you receive these impressions and are conscious of them.

Indeed, you are more clearly conscious of them than others, because you receive them unclouded by your thoughts or feelings. In relation to impressions you preserve full consciousness; you do not cut yourself off from them by trance, as the Indians did in samadhi, and you therefore remain in all-consciousness. For you this is turiya, the “fourth state of consciousness”. The Indians could attain it only in trance; for you it is always available, it is your normal state. Only in this state can you practise contemplation properly, that is, sink with your consciousness into an object freely chosen and dwell upon it, for contemplation is precisely such “dwelling upon” or inward absorption. Naturally, the object may equally well be a physical thing, a feeling, a sensory concept, or an abstract idea.

You will now understand the connection between the splitting of the personality and the formation of a centre for etheric currents in the head. So long as the mutual connection between thinking, feeling and willing had not been loosened within you, you could not attempt to direct the etheric body freely, for it was precisely this body that was constrained in its movements by its connection with the other bodies. It could act only jointly with the astral and mental bodies, and thus possessed not one centre but three centres from

which its currents radiated. Only when you freed thinking from compulsory connection with feeling and will did you at that same moment release the centre in the head from constraint. By freeing feeling from its connection with will, you release the second centre, situated in the region of the larynx. When you have strengthened it sufficiently for currents to radiate from it through the etheric body, you may begin preparing the third centre, near the heart. The establishment of each of these centres causes the corresponding padma to bloom and mature: the two-petalled, the sixteen-petalled and the twelve-petalled. The heart padma, however, should not become active before the entire etheric body is covered by that network densely woven of minute currents over its surface. How this takes place you will learn only later; for the present you can approach it only through contemplation, taking your own etheric body as the object of inward absorption.

For such contemplation you need a certain meditative preparation whose subject is the activity of the etheric body. From the valuable directions of Dr Steiner (J) I shall give you here one such subject of meditation, taken from Rosicrucian symbolism. From the chapter of this book dealing with inspiration you probably remember the subject of reflection upon the difference between a plant and a human being. Repeat this reflection, accompanied by feelings as vivid as possible, and then construct for yourself a symbol consisting of a simple black cross upon a blue background, crowned at the crossing of its arms by a star made of seven red roses. This black cross symbolises for you the annihilation of everything low in human impulses and desires.

Only through this crucifixion do those desires acquire the pure redness possessed by the flower of the rose. Try to experience in your soul as deeply as possible this ennobling of the colour of your purified blood until it reaches the hue of the rose blossom; experience it as long and as vividly as possible. Then put aside the imagination of this symbol; that is, turn your attention away from the image of the wreath of roses upon the arms of the black cross floating in blue space, and direct your attention to the very activity of your consciousness by which you constructed this symbol. The rose, the blue, the cross are external objects, but the activity which brought them together into one symbol is already a purely inward activity. By your will you constructed this symbol. Sink now into this activity of your will; dwell upon its creative activity which assembled the symbol that tells you so much. If you can carry such absorption to the proper depth, you will experience something hitherto unknown to you: you yourself will become that cross, the rose and the blue. You will feel that you yourself have the form of the cross upon which you have stretched your desires and impulses, while the innocent redness of the seven roses will change for you into the pure radiations of your seven lotuses. Practise such preparatory contemplation every day until you obtain precisely the result just described, and only then pass to the next. The opening passage of the Gospel according to St John contains one of the most powerful subjects, and if you can carry out the contemplation properly, you will yourself perceive how far-reaching its action is. These are the simple sentences: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.” The following sentences will already serve as the subject of a second, separate contemplation: “In Him

was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." Do not be discouraged if at the very first exercise you fail to reach a result, or even if you do not yet comprehend the depth of meaning contained in those apparently simple sentences. Here precisely you will be able to test your own perseverance and your ability not to be discouraged by failure. Do not, however, pass to the second subject of contemplation until you have obtained an unmistakable result in the first.

I shall no longer give you ready-made lines of thought along which you might conduct contemplation. From the preceding directions it is sufficiently clear how you are to form such lines for yourself. Form them, therefore, yourself; try to depend upon no one and nothing, but upon yourself alone. If you follow a mistaken line of thought, your sense of truth will warn you in time to turn back from the wrong road. And you will probably turn back many times before you succeed in finding the right track. But you will also be enriched by a whole series of experiences gained through these early failures.

The point is precisely that you should not walk another's road but your own; that you should do nothing blindly and passively, but always everything consciously and of your own free will. The Master will give you only the conditions which you must fulfil and will indicate the results which you must attain, but he will provide you with no mechanical means. "You cannot travel the Path until you have become that Path yourself," says the Guru to the accepted pupil; to the journeyman, however, he speaks differently: "Thou art the Path." Compare with this now the words of Christ: "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

You must therefore find the way yourself, by your own powers and within yourself. If you received it ready-made from outside, for example from me, you would be following my way, not your own. And if I give you subjects for meditation and contemplation, it does not follow that these are "my" subjects. They belong to humanity as a whole. You may regard the subject from the Gospel of John as having existed for nineteen centuries before you perceive that it is incomparably older. Every subject I have cited for you is universally human and can be applied in every epoch of mankind's development. According to the evolutionary level of those epochs it will awaken something different in each, but in every one it will awaken precisely the loftiest faculties that can be attained at that epoch. The subject of the Rosy Cross, although it has existed for only six centuries, is likewise universally human, for in every subject the essential thing is what it awakens, while its intellectual content is secondary. What matters is not the details of its construction or the material, but the forces which built it and the faculties which it awakens. The subject is only a means of awakening certain forces in the soul, and those forces themselves will then lead you to results, perhaps at times entirely different from the subject. From this standpoint take both the subjects already given and the further ones which you will find in this book. I shall now give you three more, taken (F) from the "Hall of Learning": "Before the ear can hear, it must have lost its sensitiveness."

"Before the voice can speak in the presence of the Masters, it must have lost the power to wound."

"Before the soul can stand in the presence of the Masters, its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart."

When you sincerely undertake the practice of these exercises, you will gradually begin to understand what contemplation is and what its connection with the state of samadhi is. At the stage of dharana you had concentration; at the stage of dhyana, meditation; and only on the stage of samadhi do you have contemplation. Such complete sinking and absorption as we call contemplation becomes possible only after reaching the stage of samadhi. You must then be master not only of your attention — for that you acquired through dharana — and not only know how to meditate — for that you attained through dhyana — but in addition you must sink completely into the object of your reflection, dwell upon it, live in it, become it yourself.

Formerly this was called "losing oneself" in something, and the expression was very apt. Contemplation will be perfect only when you lose yourself completely in the object of your meditation, when for that time you lose the memory of yourself.

Consider now what it means to lose the memory of yourself. What is the totality of what you call yourself? What you are has been shaped by the sum of your experiences, your mental, emotional and physical experiences, all that you have accumulated in memory. If, therefore, you suddenly lost your memory now, you would cease to be yourself. You would not know who you are, what your name is, where you come from, whom you know, what you know; in a word, you would know nothing about yourself, you would not be yourself. And in contemplation, in this losing of yourself, you are precisely to lose that memory, you are to cease to be yourself. This does not mean, however, that you are to lose memory forever. You are only to lay it aside as unnecessary ballast so that it may not hinder you in contemplation. Later, after the inward absorption is ended, you will return to your store of memories, return to what you call yourself; in other words, you will "come to yourself". This again is one of those old expressions, extraordinarily exact although people today have lost the understanding of what it means. You "come to yourself" when you recover your memory; you return to your memory. If, then, you come "to yourself", you must previously have "gone out of yourself". The Germans have for this the expression "ausser sich sein"; in Polish there remains only the similar phrase "not to be oneself" with anger, joy, and so forth.

Thus in contemplation you "go out of yourself", and afterwards you "come to yourself", and this is literally true. Your higher self goes out of its sheaths: from the physical, etheric and astral bodies, and takes with it only the mental body. The Indian yogis did exactly the same in their sleep of samadhi. But they did it in "sleep", that is, in trance, while you do it awake. Memory, as you know, belongs to the etheric body; you therefore leave memory in that body and do not take it with you. In this way you "lose yourself", losing memory in the object of your contemplation. Your higher self does not need it. But the lower self (that which other people regard as the "I") does need it, and has it, because it has remained in your etheric body. Therefore you do not lose consciousness during your samadhi, you do not fall asleep, but remain conscious.

XVIII. Samyama

(Superconsciousness)

The three highest stages, dharana, dhyana and samadhi, taken together are called samyama in raja-yoga. You already know that these stages do not follow one another successively, but run side by side. Samyama, therefore, is not a fourth stage following those three, but their sum, their crowning. Samyama requires the faculties developed in dharana, dhyana and samadhi. And the faculties you have developed are the powers of concentration, meditation and contemplation. By applying all three together, you practise samyama. During your exercises up to this point you have probably noticed that concentration alone can be practised by itself, whereas neither meditation nor contemplation can. When meditating, you must at the same time employ concentration, for without sustained attention it is impossible to reflect for any length of time upon one object. For contemplation you need not only concentration but meditation as well. You can sink into a chosen object and dwell upon it only when you can keep your attention fixed upon it for a suitable time and unite yourself with it through meditation. Therefore samyama requires dharana, dhyana and samadhi simultaneously, and for that reason it is all three at once.

If you have truly reached samyama — that is, if you have reached it not merely by reading and understanding what it is — you have accomplished something of extraordinary importance. You have simply verified by experience that spirit exists. You have verified that one can think not only with the brain but with the spirit; that one can be conscious of oneself not only in the physical body but outside it, and even outside the etheric and astral bodies. You have verified that beyond what until now you called your "I" there exists another "I", not only as real as the former one, but infinitely more valuable.

This second "I", your higher self, will at first seem to you something rather alien, almost a separate being that has come from who knows where and begins to interfere in your affairs. But this being seems alien to you only when you think in an earthly way, when by old habit you regard your bodies as your "I". Properly speaking, it is to them, to those bodies, that this being seems alien, not to you; they are the ones that would often like to rebel against it and refuse obedience. But you do not permit them to do so, because you know that this other being is precisely you — the true, immortal you. To reach this point, however, you had to practise meditation and contemplation for a sufficiently long time and with sufficient depth. Each of the subjects I have given you so far is enough for at least two months, so altogether you have a store of subjects for several years.

I have already told you that it would be useless to pass to a new subject before the preceding one has produced its prescribed action upon your bodies.

Observe that meditation acts downward from the mental body upon the astral and etheric bodies, and it requires at least a week to act upon each of them if you practise it regularly every day. Thus, for its action to pass from the mental body all the way to the etheric body takes, under the best conditions, three weeks; and how many times will you perform a meditation inaccurately, only superficially, or omit it altogether.

Here every omission, every day's interruption, has a doubly unfavourable effect upon the result. Meditation is to create a spiritual rhythm; it is to train you to establish every day, at a fixed hour, conscious connection with your higher self. Every missed day therefore makes it harder to establish this connection the next time, disturbs the successive rhythm and delays the blossoming of your padmas. You will now understand the full importance of what you may remember from the introductory chapters of this book, when I told you that five minutes a day is enough for yoga exercises, provided you devote those five minutes to them steadily, every day.

Here too you will be able to understand the full truth of a sentence which you have probably encountered before and may have regarded as a theoretical proposition rather than something capable of exact practical application. It reads: "When you take one step toward knowledge, take at the same time three steps toward moral ennoblement." Without those three steps toward ethical purification, your one step toward knowledge would be purposeless; for you understand that you can attain this knowledge, this higher cognition, only when you are able to rise to the heights where that knowledge lies. And you can rise only when no ballast of gross matter weighs you down, when all your bodies are so pure that nothing low remains in them to press them downward toward the earth.

"The ladder by which the disciple ascends is made of suffering and pain, and these can be overcome only by the power of virtue... The lower end of the ladder stands in the thick mire of thy sins and errors; and before thou canst cross the deep abyss of matter, thou must wash thy feet in the waters of self-renunciation. Beware lest thou set even a soiled foot upon the lowest rung. Woe to him who with unclean feet defiles the ladder. The sticky mire will dry upon them and fasten the climber's feet, as an unwary bird is caught upon birdlime, and so will stop his further upward progress." These are the poetic, but profoundly true, words (D) taken from *The Voice of the Silence*.

Without such moral purification samyama would fail completely. You would even observe here a purely physical, and therefore outward, symptom which would confirm this experimentally for you.

If you tried to rise to the heights of samyama without the strictest purification and ennoblement of your bodies, you would be unable to retain consciousness and with every effort toward samyama would involuntarily fall into trance. You would simply have to leave your bodies behind, cast them off, because they would be too heavy and too impure for the heights to which samyama leads. For this reason the hatha-yogi, even if on the whole he is not moving in an explicitly black-magical direction, cannot enter the higher worlds except in trance. He must leave his bodies on earth, for they would be an insuperable obstacle to him, although even those "higher" worlds to which he has access do not yet belong to the highest. As you already know, this is

barely the astral plane, or at most the lower regions of the mental plane — worlds in which you have long been able to dwell in full consciousness because you practise imagination and inspiration.

If, therefore, it should happen that against your will and despite every effort you fall into unconsciousness during exercises in samyama, do not blame samyama, but yourself. Evidently you have not practised yama and niyama with sufficient exactness; evidently you have not conducted your daily examinations of conscience strictly and impartially enough, since in your bodies there still lie hidden sediments so heavy that you cannot carry them with you. If, then, during samyama you perceive that it is becoming increasingly difficult to preserve consciousness and that you are beginning to lose awareness, suspend your exercises in samyama for a time and examine your own interior all the more strictly. It may be that while ascending the stages of dharana and dhyana you paid less attention to your inner life and that, without your knowledge, something wholly undesirable has sprouted there. Most often it will be pride, but pride disguised so skilfully that you will not at once notice its existence. Selfishness goes hand in hand with it, for one cannot be proud without being selfish.

Consider now what samyama is and wherein it consists. You already know that it comprises dharana, dhyana and samadhi. But that is merely an enumeration of its components, not a description of its essence. Do not, however, try to frame a definition, however exact and exhaustive, for definitions, even the most excellent, can never embrace everything. Instead of defining, collect its characteristic features — characterise it. Definitions are worthless in occult knowledge, if only because here each thing has at least seven meanings; you could therefore give seven different definitions for each thing, and all would be equally good, that is, equally one-sided. Recall only what samyama is for you and what it is for a hatha-yogi. Consider also what it would be for a decided black magician. Moreover, observe that the essence of a thing changes in the course of time: it simply develops and perfects itself, although the name remains unchanged. Samyama such as yours would not have been possible in ancient India. Even the loftiest of their raja-yogis could not have practised it in full consciousness, because they had not yet reached the requisite degree of development.

In practising samyama you employ dharana, dhyana and samadhi. All three are indispensable here, and this is a characteristic feature of samyama.

Samadhi is, as you know, a state different from the waking state of an ordinary person, and in that state of samadhi you employ dharana and dhyana. Without samadhi, you would have concentration and meditation, but not samyama. Only during samadhi is contemplation possible. You already know that the state you enter during samadhi is called turiya; you might therefore define samyama as “contemplative turiya”, but you will soon perceive how one-sided such a definition is, although it seems to you as exact as possible. For you can practise samyama even upon the most commonplace objects, for which ordinary daily observation would suffice. The one-sidedness and partial character of every definition lies in its very premise. By defining something you make it finite, congealed, limited and dead; but samyama is a faculty, a possibility, and therefore something always living, continually becoming and

changing, not something finished and petrified. It is not a fact but a power of creating different facts without limit.

While reading — or rather, while studying this book closely — you may have noticed more than once that in different chapters I say different things about the same matters. In those different places I characterise the same things for you from different angles. Form for yourself an imagination of a triangular lantern made of three coloured panes, with a candle enclosed between them. Once I show you the candle from the side of the red pane, another time from the yellow, and another from the blue. Yet each time you see the same candle. You see it each time only from a different side and through a different pane, although each time you see it correctly and exactly. Consider now what connection this has with the difference between definition and characterisation.

If you take as a subject of samyama the Divine Trinity — the Father, the Son and the Spirit as one God in three Persons — you will soon come to perceive the difference between the scholastic definition of that Trinity and what you feel as the characteristic quality of tri-unity. You will then also become more tolerant of the phraseology which, with apparent logic, tries to prove that "the Father cannot be older than the Son, because He is Father only from the moment He has a Son."

As an optional subject I shall give you here one of Patanjali's "aphorisms on yoga" (L, III, 34): "Samyama applied to the heart gives consciousness of the faculty of thought." Consider how many centuries ago these aphorisms were written, and compare them with the words of the Seeress of Prevorst (K): "In the state of complete clairvoyance I think with the spirit alone in the region of the pit of the stomach... This spiritual waking occurs only at moments when a person loses himself within himself or goes out of himself." Mrs Hauffe, as you know, divided the human constitution into three members: spirit, soul and body. This agreed with the threefold division of the Rosicrucians, although she had never heard of them.

Here again you have a trinity. Unite it in samyama with the three padmas in your body — the two-petalled, sixteen-petalled and twelve-petalled padmas — and then add in the same samyama the three powers of your being: thought, feeling and will.

When you can carry out this samyama correctly, you will arrive at a conception of what the human spirit is. I say explicitly one conception, because you already know that such conceptions may be very different and yet equally true. I shall no longer give you in detail the method of conducting this samyama, for the point is that you should arrive at your own conception of spirit, not mine. And you already know the general line along which every samyama is to proceed. You begin with dharana, that is, concentration of attention upon the object of samyama; you form the clearest possible imagination of it; then you devote yourself to meditation upon it; and finally you reject the object itself and sink only into the impression which those imaginations and your meditative activity have made upon your inner being. You lose yourself completely in that impression and reach the height of superconsciousness. The essential point is that you should be able to implant what you learn there into your etheric body, that is, carry it over into ordinary consciousness. The

difficulties of transferring such higher experiences into daily consciousness are extraordinarily great. Prepare yourself for the possibility that at first the sole result of your samyama may be the impression that you have entered some void, a complete nothingness, from which you return to normal consciousness with a pleasant feeling of relief and certainty. You would experience something similar if you found yourself in an unknown place amid the densest darkness, at last broken by a sudden burst of clear light. The plane of superconsciousness which you enter through samyama is so utterly different from all states of consciousness known to you that the first impression is inevitably emptiness and darkness. You encounter there nothing familiar, nothing definite — nothing at all from which you could distinguish yourself and say: this is I, and that is not-I, something different from me. You would like to say "tat tvam asi", but there is nothing of which to say it. Everything is nothingness, even you yourself are nothingness. It is well if you can still preserve a sense of yourself, a sense of your existence; for you do not even take the faculty of thought with you there.

It is no wonder that after such initial experiences you will be overtaken by periods of that spiritual darkness of which I spoke to you earlier. They will overtake you especially when at the same time blows also strike you from without, blows which you would gladly call the thunderbolts of an envious fate. You may be visited by illness, material trouble, or an unexpected worsening of conditions in which until then you had lived peacefully, and simultaneously with this — or rather in consequence of it — you will fall into that period of spiritual darkness already familiar to you from earlier experiences. It will seem to you that everyone and everything has abandoned you.

You will even feel this as a personal wrong, imagining that since you are already so "high on the Path", certain special rights and conveniences of life are due to you. You will doubt the purpose of your striving; you will even doubt the existence of the higher worlds, although you have entered them so many times before. You will feel yourself the unhappiest person in the world, alone and without anyone upon whom to lean, until at last you reach the conviction that support must be sought not outside but only within yourself; that it is precisely you who must be a support not only to yourself but to all around you. Only then will that spiritual darkness begin to disappear, dispersed by your own light.

These periods of darkness will be dangerous to you only at first. The more of them you endure, the more accustomed you will become to them, and the more courageously you will face them, although they will grow ever more threatening. Only when you have developed within yourself such fortitude that everywhere and always you can rely exclusively upon yourself, without looking for any help from outside, will you see clearly and unmistakably that you are not alone in the world. You will see others who, like you, laboriously break through darkness toward light; you will see them higher or lower than yourself, but you will feel a bond with them and know that all of you together advance toward one common goal... toward the light.

XIX. Intuition
(Conscience)

I have called intuition "conscience" in the heading in order to satisfy your habitual inclination to define everything in precise terms, although you already know that a definition can never be entirely precise. It is the same here, for intuition encompasses much more than conscience. It merely has a character similar to that of conscience.

You have already learned to observe your inner experiences and can therefore recognise the character of conscience. It does not reason, proves nothing, does not "think" logically; it simply pronounces a judgment: "one ought to act in such and such a way!" It appears as a dogmatic assertion, but unlike a dogma it does not demand blind faith of you; on the contrary, it allows you afterwards to reason out why it advised you to act in this or that way. It is only conscience itself that does not reason, but asserts; afterwards you may think and reason as much as you please.

Conscience, then, does not think, and intuition likewise does not think. It stands as far above thinking as the causal body stands above the mental body. And you know that the causal body already belongs to the arupa plane, on which there are no separate forms. There, therefore, there can be no thinking, for there is no one there to think; there all beings are one, and your being is one with all. You will now understand whence the name "intuition" comes, which in Latin literally signifies "immersion". At the moment of intuition you cease to be yourself; in spirit you immerse yourself in that ocean of which you are but one drop. You unite with all the other drops which together form that ocean, and thereby participate in the omniscience and omnipotence of the ocean. By yourself, as one drop, you do not possess that omniscience; therefore, after separating again from the ocean following the lightning-flash of intuition, you must laboriously arrive through mental reasoning at the reasons why intuition bade you act in one way or another.

The following example will give you a rough analogy between intuition and cerebral thinking. A simple man asks you in which direction London lies from Warsaw. You answer that it lies to the west, and then you see him whip up his horse and gallop straight westward. You catch up with him and say briefly: "You cannot!" That was intuition; for that simple man, you played the role of intuition. You had no time even to think why he could not; you knew only that he could not, but had no time to bring the reasons consciously to mind. Only later, when the simple man stopped and asked why he could not, did you begin slowly to explain that it was very far and that he could not ride a horse across the sea.

If the simple man understood your explanation and did not set out, that means he obeyed your intuition; if he did not obey it but started on his journey, after a long journey he reached the seashore and only then learned by experience that the intuition had been right.

It is always the same with intuition. There comes to you suddenly — not a feeling or a thought — but rather a sense which you might be inclined to call an unconscious impulse. Later you will discover that it is by no means unconscious, but all-knowing; for the time being, however, call it an impulse. It appears suddenly and drives you toward an action which to your reason seems unmotivated, even illogical. If you resist this "impulse" and do not do what it urges you to do, you may discover only years later that you were mistaken in not obeying it. If, on the other hand, you obey without deliberation, at once, and only afterwards begin by mental reasoning to seek motives that would justify the act logically, you may — though not always — succeed in understanding that you acted rightly. Most often, however, only the consequences of your act will convince you that it was purposeful and right.

Intuition, therefore, has nothing in common with impulse except that, like impulse, it is not the result of mental inference. Intuition appears first, and only afterwards comes the work of thought which tries to understand the motives. Here also lies the fundamental difference between intuition and conscience. Intuition appears suddenly, in a flash, before you have time to think or decide anything; it always appears unexpectedly — at least in everyday life — and dictates what you are to do, although often you had not yet intended to do anything at all.

It can appear only when you are silent in your mental body, and of course in the brain — that is, when you are not thinking at all. And because you think continually, it can appear only in that very brief instant which passes between one thought and another. Hence the appearance of intuition is always so lightning-like. Hence too it appears most clearly when for a moment you stand without thinking, startled by some sudden and dangerous event. It then impels you immediately to a decision, to action, and when you obey it, it falls silent because it has already saved you. Afterwards you often do not know how it "came into your head" to act in just that way!

Conscience, on the other hand, appears either at the moment when you hesitate how to act, and there is therefore time for hesitation, or after the deed, when you wish to justify it to yourself by thought. Then it reproves your deed, makes you ashamed before yourself, and often gives you no peace for years. These are the familiar "reproaches of conscience". The expression is not accidental, for the same Polish word is also used for eruptions on the skin. When you develop clairvoyance, you will often perceive such "eruptions" upon people's auras, disfiguring the aura and sometimes causing its owner very painful discomfort.

You will now understand how the reproaches of conscience can persist even beyond earthly death, since you know that they remain like pimples or eruptions upon the astral and mental bodies. Yet actions are not the only consequences of intuition. An action is a manifestation of will, and intuition acts not only upon the will. Just as often — if not more often — intuition manifests itself as knowledge. When it appears as a manifestation of will,

you may assume that its source is those Exalted Beings who in Christian esotericism are called the "Thrones"; when it manifests as knowledge, its source lies in other, equally exalted Beings called the "Kyriotetes". Both belong to the highest Spiritual Hierarchies.

As an expression of knowledge, intuition instructs you at once and comprehensively, as though in "one word". When you attain frequent and distinct intuitions, you will be able to observe them just as until now you have learned to observe your own faculty of thought. You will then notice that this "one word", in which intuition encloses exhaustive omniscience concerning a given problem, has rather the character of a number than of a word. Such a number — different, of course, for each thing — contains within itself the value of that thing, all its characteristic qualities, its relation to other things, its potential energy, in short everything that can be known about it.

The vague sense that intuition expresses itself in numbers rather than words will at first seem directly contrary to logic, for you are accustomed to regard numbers as mathematical signs and therefore as purely abstract, connected with nothing real. Observe, however, that this very sense that intuition expresses itself in numbers is itself intuitive, and consequently you will not at once be able to test its correctness by logical thought. In clairvoyance, numbers will speak to you as clearly and distinctly as words do in everyday life. An example is supplied by the "Seeress of Prevorst" and her "inner numbers" (K, 257), by which she designated the names and properties of things. You will also understand the other, far more secret series of her inner numbers, one of which, for example, in addition to her name also indicated the date of her death. One series of inner numbers came from the "Thrones", while the other, the deepest, came from the "Kyriotetes". Do not, however, confuse these sacred numbers with the numbers of the Kabbalah, which are only their clouded reflections upon the astral plane.

These are some — though certainly not all — of the features that characterise intuition. In preceding chapters I shed light on it for you from other angles, for at that time you had not yet matured to the point of view which I have now given you. Only now, when you can already think without the brain, can you rise still higher, to the attainment of knowledge without any thinking whatever. Only such knowledge fully deserves the name intuitive.

You will now understand why the "journeyman", even if he can scarcely read and write, nevertheless surpasses in knowledge the most celebrated "scholar". He surpasses him immeasurably, just as intuition surpasses rational knowledge, that is, knowledge which can be reached by thinking.

The heights of intuition can also be reached by natural clairvoyants, or by persons thrown into deep trance through magnetism — not hypnotism — provided, of course, that they are morally pure enough. Clairvoyants of a lower moral level likewise readily make use of Kabbalistic numbers, but these are only genuinely Kabbalistic numbers, and therefore merely astral ones, for they are incapable of reaching any higher. Do not expect, therefore, that you will immediately acquire the power to express your intuitions in numbers; for if you judge yourself sincerely, without hidden pride, you will admit that you are still far from such a moral level as would allow you to reach Beings as exalted as the "Thrones" or the "Kyriotetes". Your exercises in developing intuition proceed,

moreover, in a different direction from those of mediums or clairvoyants. They aim at enabling you to attain intuition while retaining full consciousness, and this is far more difficult than falling into trance and in it soaring to the heights of arupa. Such a faculty of intuition with full consciousness will belong only to the human being of the future; you are therefore to anticipate the course of events by thousands of years. This is naturally more difficult than taking refuge in trance from external or internal impressions which hinder immersion in the arupa worlds.

Patanjali (L) rightly says that there are five kinds of obstacles: false concepts, true concepts, images, sleep and memory, and that the suppression of these obstacles is yoga. And what else is yoga if not union? The union of your lower self with the higher, of everyday consciousness with superconsciousness. And superconsciousness is intuition; the point, therefore, is to unite ordinary consciousness with intuition. This union is obstructed by the obstacles enumerated by Patanjali: true and false concepts, that is, all concepts whatsoever; then imagination, sleep and memory. You form concepts of things you have known, and they make up your rational knowledge, obtained by the operations of thought. Without imagination you could not form images of things which make impressions upon you; and from those images you then form concepts. In sleep you do not, it is true, receive sensory impressions, because your astral body withdraws from the physical, but you do receive astral impressions, fragments of which you remember after waking. Memory, finally, enables you to reproduce images and concepts, and its seat — as you know — is the etheric body. Putting all this together, you come to the conclusion that the obstacles to intuition are all your mortal sheaths: the physical, etheric, astral and mental bodies, that is, everything which together composes your lower self.

Observe, then, that your lower self is an obstacle to intuition, yet you are not to fight it or put it aside, but to keep it with you, since you are to attain intuitions consciously.

You will now understand that this cannot be achieved without yoga, without the union of your lower self with the higher. Only when the higher self is united with the lower, when there are no longer two separate beings within you but one unity, do your bodies cease to be obstacles to intuition; for then you can at will receive impressions or not receive them, think or not think, remember or switch memory off. You will now also understand why intuition appears to you precisely in those brief moments in which you do not think. You, as the “Divine Spark”, are unity; you cannot therefore split and divide yourself. If you think, you are dwelling in the mental body; you cannot at the same time immerse yourself in the arupa worlds, the worlds of intuition. You must withdraw from the mental body even for a fraction of a second in order to enter the world of intuition. When, therefore, I said that your lower self — and thus also the mental body — is not to be an obstacle to you, I did not mean that you were to take the mental body with you into the world of intuition. It could not enter there; it is too gross, too heavy, it is simply “rupa”. It simply must not hinder you; for that brief moment it must cease troubling you with thoughts. And this is precisely what your exercises in mastering thought were intended to accomplish. Through pratyahara you learned at will to detach attention from external impressions, from memory and from thinking. You now see

how indispensable is the practice of exercises which — apparently — have no connection whatever with spiritual development. Their connection becomes visible only later.

You have learned here a number of features characterising intuition, and you have learned some of the conditions without which it is impossible. If you fulfilled these conditions — that is, if you detached attention from external impressions and for a moment ceased to feel and think — you would indeed attain intuitions, but only accidental ones, so to speak. It would be something like opening a scientific book at random and reading the page upon which your eye happened to fall. Naturally one can learn something even in this way. You, however, want to choose for yourself what you wish to learn; in other words, you want to choose the object of your intuition. For this it is not enough to cut yourself off from impressions and wait thoughtlessly until intuition happens to appear.

Here you need to join with the object of intuition, to become one with it, to become it yourself. You can become the object of your intuition only by immersing yourself in it, by sinking into it with your whole being. Here you have the second literal meaning of the word "intuition" — immersion. With your physical body you cannot immerse yourself in the physical body of the object, because the two bodies are separated from one another by their boundaries.

They have hard surfaces through which they cannot penetrate. Even if the object of your intuitive investigation were water, you would not "immerse" yourself in it in the sense meant here; for in entering it you do not penetrate into the water, you merely displace it with your body. In the place occupied by your body there is no water; you are therefore not one with it, because the surface of your body separates you. You are not water, only in water, whereas to attain intuition you would have to become the water itself. Nor can you accomplish this with the etheric, astral or mental body.

This union with the object can be attained only where all things are one, that is, on the arupa plane. There all things, all beings, all ideas are one. Do not suppose that it is more difficult to unite with an idea than with a thing or a being. An example is provided by the creative work of Juliusz Slowacki. He was never a father, as you know, and yet in his *Father of the Plague-Stricken* he created a marvellous poem of parental anguish. Through poetic intuition he immersed himself in the idea of "father" and united with it so completely that he was able to feel every degree of the suffering of a father losing his children one after another. If you thought that this work was not the product of intuition but of psychometry, you would be right, but only half right. Slowacki received the inspiration to write *Father of the Plague-Stricken* under the influence of a story heard in the very place where the events described had occurred. Together, what he heard and his presence at the scene of the events acted psychometrically upon the poet's sensitive nature, giving him visions of the events. These visions filled him with the inspiration to write the poem; they were therefore inspiration, but not yet intuition. Slowacki was not a "journeyman" of the occult Path and had not trained within himself the faculty of conscious intuition; but vision and inspiration raised him to the level on which he could receive an intuitive feeling of paternal grief. And

what else is vision if not imagination? Here, therefore, you have the same three stages which you too recognise: first imagination, then inspiration, and finally intuition. Through the astral plane Slowacki rose to the mental plane, and thence reached the arupa plane. Your road is exactly the same. The only difference is that you travel it consciously, whereas Slowacki trod it unconsciously. Thus he was a poet, while you will be a journeyman. Since he nevertheless reached intuition, he fully deserves the name of a poet-seer, like Mickiewicz and Krasinski.

From this small example you can see that occult knowledge can be useful even in literature when one seeks to understand the paths of literary creation. It will be equally useful to you in understanding the phenomena in the field that in more recent times has come to be called metapsychics. Psychometry also belongs to that field.

Its definition there is as follows: "Certain sensitive persons, by touching or approaching a chosen object, are able not only to sense its substance, shape and colour and to describe it exactly, but also to state the place from which it comes, the person to whom it belongs, and even to relate events which took place in the vicinity of that object." For metapsychics this is all that can be known about psychometry; it therefore studies its manifestations, gathers statistical data on the percentage of people who are psychometrically sensitive and on the degree of their sensitivity, investigates the truthfulness of their statements, measures their pulse and body temperature, and thereby exhausts its programme of inquiry. You, however, will be able to regard psychometry from another standpoint. Its phenomena interest you less, because you do not doubt them; you attach chief importance to its essence, which you wish to fathom and understand. This will not even be difficult for you, since you already know something of the astral and mental planes. You also know that on each of these planes there exist more or less clouded reflections of the images of that magnificent cosmic cinematograph which is the Akashic Record. For you, then, psychometry is simply the viewing of those Akashic images in astral or mental reflections. On each plane the images undergo a new refraction, and are therefore the more clouded and inaccurate the lower the plane upon which you view them.

The connection between psychometry and intuition may appear rather loose at first; yet in Slowacki you have already had an example showing that this connection exists. Observe also that the whole field of occult knowledge which embraces the history of the universe is nothing other than the Akashic Record read by "journeymen". Untrained clairvoyants read it too, but they do not understand what the phenomena they see mean and cannot interpret them properly. You too, although you already have years of exercises behind you, would still be inexperienced in understanding these Akashic apparitions. Therefore do not yet try to approach them directly in your experiments. You may, however, use psychometry as an intermediate route in exercises aimed at obtaining intuition concerning chosen objects. Such exercises are, of course, by no means obligatory. Their method is as follows: take the object in your hand or place it upon your stomach. Close your eyes and try with your being to penetrate into the interior of the object. Think of nothing; do not try to guess or feel anything, but wait passively and calmly. After a while impressions or

images will begin to emerge. You may feel sympathy or aversion toward the object; an image of the person to whom it belonged may appear, or images of the surroundings in which it was situated. Take the greatest care not to mix your conjectures or judgments with these images even for a moment.

You are to be only an indifferent spectator, without feeling and without thought, but remembering exactly everything you see. When you have learned to impress these images upon memory, cease paying attention to them and concern yourself exclusively with the impressions which the object makes upon your inner being. This is more difficult than psychometry, but you will attain it too. You will then see not Akashic reflections from the surroundings of the object, but the astral or mental form of the object itself; and from there it is only one step to intuition, to obtaining the deepest and most comprehensive knowledge of that object, and above all the truest knowledge, drawn directly from the source and not clouded by refractions through the astral or mental plane.

XX. Illumination
(At the Gates of Death)

The last three stages, dharana, dhyana and samadhi, together form, as you know, the Path of "probation". On the five preceding stages you were "preparing" yourself to become worthy of "illumination". You attained this illumination precisely through imaginations, inspirations and intuitions. Imaginations bring you illumination concerning the astral world, inspirations concerning the mental world, while intuitions already introduce you into the arupa worlds. The knowledge you acquire upon these different planes is precisely the "illumination" by which you rise above ordinary people.

You will understand for yourself that during the years of "probation" this illumination cannot yet pass beyond certain limits. Being still only "on probation", there is as yet no complete guarantee that you will not use the knowledge gained through illumination in a mistaken or even harmful way. Only your "initiation" will provide such a guarantee. Here again the situation is the same as in the opening chapters, when I compared the yoga Path with the years of training of a craftsman's apprentice and then of a journeyman on probation. A pupil who had been advanced to the rank of journeyman was not yet admitted at once to all the secrets of the craft. Only as he proved worthy of confidence did the master admit him to further and further mysteries of his trade. In the same way you, as a journeyman on probation, are not yet finally "accepted". You work, while the Masters observe you; they watch your work, your conduct, and above all your inner life, your feelings and thoughts.

Do not forget for a moment that during the period of "illumination", and therefore throughout the entire time of "probation", you are under continual though invisible supervision. The Masters observe you more closely and accurately than you could observe yourself; they see within you far more clearly than you are able to see. They see all your progress, but also your lapses, and these are more numerous than you suppose.

Imagine a man who has a piece of land to cultivate as a garden. For seven years he worked at clearing it and weeding it, sowing vegetables and grafting fruit trees. During that time he naturally gained much gardening experience and acquired a certain stock of illumination in this field. On the basis of this knowledge he continues sowing and planting, expecting better results than before. Yet while sowing and planting new growth, he neglects to weed, and the weeds spread unnoticed by him. Will his present knowledge therefore give him better crops than before, or will it go to waste because the garden is overgrown with weeds?

You behave very much like that man.

On the five lower stages you tried — I assume sincerely and earnestly — to root out all faults and habits within yourself and to plant in their place the qualities required by the Path. Having passed from this "preparation" to the Path of probation, you said to yourself: "I have weeded out the bad habits and faults within myself and planted the required qualities, so now I may calmly continue grafting and gather fruits, for I have already got rid of the weeds." But you did not reflect that weeds, in the soul as in the soil, grow continually anew unless you destroy them without interruption, without respite. You are not allowed to rest for a moment, because every rest is already a step backward on the Path. He who does not advance retreats. By failing to progress he remains in place, while others go on and leave him behind.

Look attentively into your own depths, without indulgence and without insincerity toward yourself. Can you really find no fault — truly none at all — within yourself? Have you actually weeded out every weed so thoroughly that not one has sprung up again? Is there really nothing, absolutely nothing, choking those good little plants which you cultivated in the soul with such care and labour? If you answer no, you will deceive yourself. You will conceal from yourself the actual state of affairs. Take as an example something as small as that of which Krishnamurti (G) writes so beautifully when describing the qualities of truly disinterested service. Can you really reach the point where, after rendering someone a service, even a very great one, you do not boast of it — if not to him, then to some third person? Can you remain an "unknown benefactor", and genuinely unknown to everyone? And even if you sometimes can, does a feeling of self-satisfaction not pass through your soul, or perhaps even the thought: "Well, now I have really done something extraordinary; let someone else try to do that!"

And yet this is something quite small and ordinary. Certainly it is neither ordinary nor small among ordinary people; but on the "Path" it is something taken for granted. You see from this how difficult it is completely to root out self-love and pride. The two go hand in hand, although they often assume very innocent appearances. Does the thought never come to you that, since you are already "so far" on the Path, some special care from those Exalted Beings who govern destiny is therefore due to you? Almost subconsciously you attribute to yourself certain extraordinary merits and therefore claim for yourself equally extraordinary privileges. You forget that the higher you ascend, the greater your obligations become, but the less right you have to expect anything for yourself. For only what you do for the good of others, without thinking of yourself at all, is truly good for you.

Your imaginations, which you have already experienced and will experience ever more frequently, instruct you very clearly concerning the quality and value of your inner being.

They show you what you really are; they place you before your own eyes as though you were another being whom you can observe and judge. Seeing yourself in this way as an astral double will occur more and more often and more distinctly, and after "initiation" it will accompany you constantly. Steiner (C) calls this the encounter with the "Guardian of the Threshold". Your double is indeed a guardian, for it prevents you from crossing the threshold of initiation if you have not thoroughly purified your soul of every weed.

You cannot force initiation by any irregular means. You must grow up to it; you cannot break into it before you have matured. In former times, when initiation took place, so to speak, from outside with the assistance of others already initiated, irregular, premature and even wholly undeserved initiations could occur. Now, however — since the time of Christ — initiation can be attained only with full self-consciousness and not on the responsibility of others. One must simply grow and mature into it, just as a plant must first grow before it can ripen. It must develop leaves and flowers before it can bear fruit. Likewise you must develop the flower of your spirit: the higher self. This flower must blossom here upon the physical plane and not remain only upon the plane of noumena as a "possibility". This means that your higher self must grow strongly into the rupa plane, into your bodies; it must master them and become their undivided ruler. Its small and feeble seed, which you planted in the soil of your soul, must have that soil clean and entirely free of weeds, so that they do not choke its growth or hinder its flowering.

For it to flower, illumination is necessary. It acts like the rays of the sun upon a plant. Through "preparation" you cultivated the soil, removed the weeds and planted the seed. Now sunlight is needed so that it may grow, and care is needed so that weeds may not overpower it. If it began to blossom among weeds, the flower would be puny and would bear no good fruit, but bitter or poisonous fruit. Continual control to see whether weeds are spreading is therefore necessary. You alone assume responsibility for everything. Your Master will indicate the way, warn you against errors, and even sustain you when you fall, but he will do nothing in your place and will be responsible for nothing.

In order that you may cross the threshold of initiation with full responsibility, you need precisely that range of illumination which you attain successively through imaginations, inspirations and intuitions.

Those astral visions of colours and radiances which perhaps formed some of your first supersensible experiences introduced you into the "Hall of Learning". They gave you exactly as much of this learning as you needed for illumination concerning the astral world. You now understand that those imaginative visions, although you did not strive for them, were by no means accidental but purposeful. And if they seemed accidental to you, independent of your will and desire, this was because they could appear only in proportion to the development of your padmas, your "supersensible senses". You could not observe their development, because you were not yet able to see the padmas themselves. A child likewise does not see its own eyes, but discovers that it has them only when it begins to perceive the outer world through them. You now know that your padmas are fully blossomed and active, because through them you receive astral impressions. Through inspirations you have learned to read these impressions: you know what they mean and from whom they come. Through intuitions, finally, you attain direct communication with those beings from whom these impressions proceed, and moreover with beings who need neither the astral nor even the mental plane for their activity. You can already distinguish astral beings from mental beings and mental beings from karmic beings.

As a result of coming into contact with such exalted beings, your relation to your karma also changes. As an ordinary human being you submitted to karma blindly and irrevocably. The Lipikas allotted it to you for each incarnation in such a measure that you could work it out in that incarnation without excessive strain but also without idleness. They simply "tempered the wind to the shorn lamb". You were bound by your karma in each life so tightly that, whether willing or unwilling, you had to work it out; even the manner of working it out was imposed upon you and strictly determined. Life therefore drove you inexorably in the direction marked out for you before birth; your own faults and passions led you into precisely those conditions of life best suited to your karma. From your personal point of view those conditions were, of course, most often "failures" or "misfortunes"; you attributed them to blind chance or unjust fate. Yet all the while the Lipikas were merely pulling the strings woven from your desires and errors, or using them as hammers which, striking you, would at last strike out that Divine Spark, the higher self sleeping within you.

If you carefully review your present life, you will notice that this is no longer so. From the passive victim of your karma, from a beast of burden driven by someone else, you are gradually becoming the driver of that animal. You yourself now load the burdens, choose them, determine the direction. You pass from a passive role to an active one. What the Lipikas formerly did for you, you now begin to do for yourself. You take your fate into your own hands, and you do so consciously. From a slave you are changing into a ruler. And you are changing because to a considerable extent you have already purified yourself of faults and selfish desires, so that they can no longer be hooks drawing you into karmic conditions.

The bonds which until now fettered you are disappearing; the means of directing you by compulsion are disappearing. Since you can no longer be driven, you must direct yourself. You are now free to choose in what manner you wish to work out your karma; you are even free to enlarge its scope in this life so that you may finish working it out more quickly. Your illumination serves precisely this purpose.

It also makes something further possible for you. It enables you to look into the general work carried on by those exalted beings called the Lipikas in directing the karma of the world. You may observe their work and understand the motives by which they are guided in apportioning karma to individual people, families, cities, nations and the whole globe. You become their helper; you work together with them and willingly take upon yourself a part of "impersonal" karma, that is, a part of the general karma of your city and your nation. You feel yourself co-responsible for this karma, because through your intuitions you enter into connection with beings as high as the spirits of a nation, a people or a race. You become a part of them; you participate in their karma, but also in their power.

For it is indeed a superhuman power to hold in one's hands one's own fate, the course of one's life and the course of events. And you now hold this in your hands. Moreover, you participate in a power a hundred times greater: you have influence over the karma of the world, you wield it consciously and intelligently. Consider the full weight of these words: you create history! The

history of the world will unfold as you indicate. You, a small, inconspicuous person known to no one — you create the history of the world. And you are admitted to this power over world history because you have rid yourself of egoism, and therefore there is no fear that you will misuse this power for selfish purposes contrary to the idea of universal progress.

Consider what unheard-of harm to that idea could be done by someone who possessed power like yours but did not possess your moral level. Consider that besides this power over karma you possess a whole range of other superhuman faculties. You have the faculty of astral and mental vision: you know people's feelings and their thoughts. How many abuses would someone else in your place commit, how he would exploit this reading of human thoughts and feelings, how ruthlessly he would use them for his own ends! You, however, have not done so and will not do so, because you are on the Path.

Consider further how extraordinarily — indeed, to a superhuman degree — your knowledge surpasses not only that of philosophers and natural scientists, but also that of psychologists, physiologists, sociologists and finally historians. And you do not misuse this knowledge for any secondary purpose, nor even boast of it. No one knows that you possess it, because you do not possess it for display or to awaken admiration, but only to help those who really need help. You help them anonymously and withdraw at once so that they may not even notice to whom they should be grateful.

You already know that you are to do everything without expecting any fruits; therefore you likewise help people without expecting either gratitude or even results from your help. It is by no means your concern whether your help actually proved effective, or whether it was truly help rather than harm. You did your part, that is, you did what you considered appropriate under the circumstances, and went away. You did not preserve even in the depths of your soul a feeling of satisfaction with yourself.

Still less did you preserve there the pride that you are "helping the world". You are no longer so naively conceited as to suppose that the world is waiting for your poor help, longs for it, or would be halted in its progress without it. If you withheld your help, a hundred others would appear in your place and help instead; you would merely burden your own karma by the omission. In helping the world you help only yourself; there is therefore no merit in it and no right to gratitude or recognition. And in order that the help you give others may truly be help to yourself, it must be free from expectation of fruits. When, in helping another, you do not think of yourself at all, then you truly help yourself. You gain when you do not think of gain, when you do not care about it. And "gain" here would include even your counting upon gratitude or your feeling of satisfaction with yourself.

At the end of this Path of "illumination" the threshold of initiation awaits you; and in order that you may cross this threshold, you must be ready to leave before it everything that binds you to the earth and its affairs. Counting upon the fruits of your deeds would bind you to those deeds just as counting upon people's gratitude for your help would bind you to those people. As a "journeyman" you must literally be "dead to the world", for only then will you be able to act fruitfully for it, when you cease to be entangled in it. You could not operate a machine if you yourself were one of its component parts: you

must stand outside it, not be rooted in it with your being. Therefore you must stand at the gates of death; therefore you must pass through death in order to attain initiation. You are to pass through death and yet continue living on earth, carrying within yourself the secret of what lies on the other side of death. Such secrets are not entrusted to just anyone. It happens that ordinary people too return to life after passing through death, whether in lethargy or illness; but they pass through it unconsciously, remembering nothing of what they saw there. You, however, are to pass through death consciously, remember every detail of that event — and reveal it to no one. You must be worthy of attaining this mystery without reservation, and for that reason the Path of illumination remains throughout only a Path of probation, which you may still fail to endure.

XXI. On Your Way

With Chapter XX I have completed the task I set myself in preparing this book: I have led you through the preparation for illumination, and the subject is therefore exhausted. Having reached intuition, you no longer need directions from books, whether mine or anyone else's, because everything you wish to know you will attain through intuition far more comprehensively and surely than through the best books.

This does not, of course, mean that you no longer need to study books. You are to act among people, and therefore you should know what people know, what occupies their minds, what views they hold and what they strive for. Besides this, you will need gradually to become acquainted with the more important works in all fields of occultism: not only occult knowledge in the stricter sense, but also astrology, alchemy, palmistry, the Kabbalah, spiritism, mediumship, even black magic and the cult of Baphomet; for you should know everything that people have discovered.

To know, however, and to practise are two different things. It would be superfluous to warn you that you must not practise black magic or spiritism, for you know this well yourself, and in case of doubt your intuition would warn you in time. Nor will alchemy tempt you into seeking methods of manufacturing gold, for you already know how alchemy is to be understood in its true meaning, and you have no need to manufacture gold because you will always have enough of it for all your needs. Nor will you study your horoscope through astrology, because you know that your horoscope must prove unreliable once you, as a journeyman, direct your own destiny. Finally, Kabbalistic practices will not attract you, for you have already passed through the world of the Kabbalah as through the Hall of Learning and have no intention of returning to it.

You should nevertheless know all these things, and know them thoroughly, for more than once you will have to rescue some unwary person who has become entangled in these seductive disciplines and is losing his soul in them, mistaking tinsel for gold. Mediums too will require your help, whether so-called clairvoyant, spiritistic or telekinetic, for they are all powerless to free themselves from the snares in which empty astral entities have entangled them. Finally, more than once you may have to meet determined, and therefore genuinely powerful, sorcerers face to face and paralyse their designs or counteract the evil they have already done. Here all the good powers will be at your disposal, provided only that you do not wish to misuse them.

Above all, however, you will continually have to deal with ordinary people, your younger brothers. It was for this that you entered the "Path", for this that you climb its stages all the way to journeymanship: to act among people.

You will enter among them as their guardian and guide upon the road of progress; but you will not take your place on any height or pedestal from which

you might look down upon them, preach sermons or point out the road. You will enter among them as an equal among equals, indeed you will descend lower still, for the journeyman does not work upon the surface, but at the very bottom. No one will see you, admire you, applaud you or pay you homage. You will descend among the little ones as someone unknown, unappreciated, often misunderstood and even mocked. Yet you do not fear this, because you already know how to work not for fruits or recognition, but for the work itself.

And upon this road of yours, grey and thankless yet full of inexpressible bliss, I wish to give you — not directions, not instructions or commands — but a small ray of light which should sustain in your heart that sacred fire of all-embracing love, so that it may illumine every moment of your work. You are to go among people, and this does not mean throwing aside everything that has occupied you until now and appearing as a wandering preacher; it means something incomparably more difficult. You are to remain where you are, change nothing whatever in your present life, and yet influence people and work for them. You understand that you are to act not physically, not materially, but spiritually. You are to grow into people's souls, not into their daily affairs, and to grow into them in such a way that they do not notice it at all. You are to become dear and necessary to them even though they avoid you, slander you and hate you. You are to behave in such a way that they cannot notice that they are stoning the very one without whom it is difficult for them to live.

Remember continually how many faculties you have developed within yourself, how much power for doing good they give you, and therefore how much you owe to your fellow men. To choose a few of the nearest examples, I shall mention the quality of your invisible bodies. By practising the exercises of the Path you purified your mental body, mastered its functions and made it an efficient and perfected instrument. Your thoughts are not only pure and clear but extraordinarily powerful. Their vibrations spread far around and act very strongly upon everyone in your surroundings. You therefore need neither sermons nor verbal instruction in dealing with people; your clear, logical and powerful thoughts are enough. They radiate far and act upon the mental bodies of those around you. Whether those around you become telepathically conscious of this influence or remain unaware of it is immaterial. The effect may become apparent only after some time, even a long time, but it will exert its influence unfailingly. In this very way you will act upon people most powerfully. Whenever you hear people express some erroneous or absurd view, do not immediately try to correct or criticise it. Remain silent, even if your silence may be taken as confirmation; only in thought correct the erroneous judgment.

Your powerful thought-forms will act slowly but steadily, and perhaps after some time you yourself will hear from those same people a judgment directly opposite to the former one and agreeing with your own. Through your thoughts you will simply inspire people with truer thoughts.

Be generally restrained in your desire to improve people, instruct them and give them verbal advice. People accept advice only when it confirms their intentions; otherwise they ask for advice only in order not to follow it. If, exceptionally, you meet someone who asks you for advice with sincere

confidence in you and a sincere wish to follow it, still do not give him any advice in the form of a ready-made decision as to what he should do. Try only to show him the drawbacks and advantages of the various possible courses of action in his case; show him the results to which each course will lead, and leave the decision to him. Do not be surprised, and do not look down upon him, if he chooses precisely the course which in your opinion is the least reasonable, for very often his karma will drive him to that particular decision and no other. Never let him feel that his decision has disappointed you; accept it calmly, without further desire to correct his views.

Your feelings and moods act just as powerfully upon the people around you. Negative feelings such as anger, impatience, envy and pride you have already rid yourself of at the stage of preparation; likewise you guard against moods of pessimism, sadness, depression and bitterness. You already know how to keep silent in feelings and moods; but in addition you are to produce positive feelings and moods so that they may radiate upon your surroundings. Every morning, before leaving home for your daily occupations, leave behind for those around you a serene, willing and contented mood. Likewise, bring to your companions at work each day a mood that is optimistic, comradely and understanding. When you sense depression or discouragement in one of them, give him special attention and try to raise his spirits, not so much by words of direct consolation, which would most often sound empty, but rather by turning his thoughts toward brighter paths and above all by silently sending him feelings of encouragement and strength. When falling asleep in the evening, never neglect to send feelings of blessing, full of love and peace, in every direction throughout the world. There is surely no need to add that before doing so you are to send heartfelt and truly sincere forgiveness to every one of those fellow beings who during the day happened to offend or even wrong you in their ignorance.

If you continually remember that there are no evil people, only ignorant ones, it will be easier for you to guard yourself against even the slightest feeling of dislike, repugnance or contempt toward people. Never permit yourself this; on the contrary, always approach people with respect and sympathy, because in each of them there glows the same Divine Spark as in you.

Do not look at their faults and weaknesses; try rather to see in each person his positive qualities. You will discover that there is no human being, even the worst criminal, in whom nothing good can be found. Often people's virtues are hidden beneath a rough, even repellent exterior; often they themselves conceal them within, discouraged by the coldness of their surroundings or by ingratitude. Your task, however, is precisely to uncover those faintly glowing sparks from beneath the ashes; therefore strive to find them in every human being regardless of appearance, position, or the opinion which others — most often unjustly — have of him.

The most outstanding quality in your relations with people should above all be understanding carried to the furthest limits — or rather, without limits: understanding not only of their faults, their ignorance and errors, but also — which is much more difficult — of their conduct toward you. Here you will be helped by the instruction, already known to you from earlier chapters of this book, to look upon people as though they were to die tomorrow. In this

way you will more easily be able to accept without impatience their behaviour toward you, perhaps even wrongs deliberately inflicted upon you. From this point of view you will also be able to judge more impartially the importance of their actions and errors; you will be able to distinguish what is lasting in their actions from passing trifles, insignificant in the face of eternity, and not attach to them the weight one attaches when one is with someone every day. This boundless tolerance, however, must be so self-evident in you that it never draws attention to itself. It would not be true tolerance if you dressed yourself in it like armour and with a shade of superiority looked upon your fellow men as a passer-by in a garden looks upon unruly schoolboys. Your understanding is not to isolate you from people behind impenetrable armour, but rather to unite you with them and draw you toward them.

The bond with people established by your understanding of them must not, however, bind you to them and restrict your independence in life. You already know the proper meaning of these words: bind yourself to no one and nothing. You are a "wanderer" who, wherever he may be, finds himself among strangers and unfamiliar surroundings. He wishes them well, helps and serves them, but does not become attached to them. At any moment he is ready to leave them and move into new surroundings without regret for the former ones. You already know from preceding chapters how to reconcile this non-attachment with love for all people. True love gives everything and demands nothing. Expecting nothing and counting upon nothing, you do not bind yourself, yet always wish others well. There are, of course, karmic ties stronger than ties of blood; they bind you to certain people for a definite time. But it is not you who bind yourself to them: karma binds you to them and releases you at the moment when you have worked out that karma.

You will encounter such cases in your later life, just as you have encountered them already. You now know how to understand them.

Special tact and caution are required in your conduct toward people who imagine that they "understand occult knowledge". When they learn or guess that you too pursue studies of a similar kind, they will regard you as "one of their own" and themselves as entitled to expect from you confidences or instruction concerning "mysteries". They will be people of many kinds: among them will be maniacs and irresponsible fantasists, spiritists, hypnotizers and tamers of "clairvoyants" or mediums, fortune-tellers and general "occultists", and also serious investigators, Theosophists and Anthroposophists. Behave toward them with reserve; listen patiently, for as a rule they like to talk a great deal, but speak little yourself and do not correct their assertions. If they ask you directly for your opinion, select what is right in their views and confirm it, but do not point out their errors. They would probably not understand you, and even if they could understand, they would not admit you were right, because their prejudices are dearer to them. From your studies you undoubtedly know those half-philosophical currents which today spread under the names of Theosophy and Anthroposophy, and therefore you know that they should not be undervalued. For the majority of their adherents they are the highest stage to which they are capable of rising at all; do not therefore destroy their reverence for their authorities and dogmas, for people on different stages believe in different authorities and accept different assertions as their own,

but have not yet matured enough to rise above the cult of any alien, external authority. In any case, these preparatory stages on which they stand deserve recognition.

Be similarly restrained toward "scientific investigators", that is, psychologists or metapsychic researchers. Knowing the higher bodies, you may sometimes suggest to them a direction in which their research might yield positive results; but then do not go beyond their materialistic level of thought, for you would at once lose their confidence — not confidence in you, but in the plausibility of what you tell them. Naturally, you will never allow yourself to be tempted into submitting your faculties to their experimental investigation; it is best that they should never even learn that you possess any supernormal faculties. Even if all their experiments with you produced irrefutable results, they would not admit that your faculties were supernormal, but would regard them merely as abnormal and therefore pathological.

Your tact and intuitive sense of limits, provided you always heed them, will protect you in all your relations with people from awkward actions and from entering situations that are difficult to repair. It will be harder to preserve this tact and calmness of mind when you encounter not merely misunderstanding or disregard from your fellow men, but even hatred or persecution.

By strictly fulfilling the command of "non-attachment", however, you will find it easier to endure such manifestations of your fellow men's ignorance; you will preserve calm among them and will not become discouraged from pursuing your further work with the same perseverance.

During the preparatory stages you had the opportunity to develop fortitude in calmly enduring personal failures; now therefore you already know how to greet success and disappointment with an equally serene brow. When clouds of trouble or misfortune gather above your head, you do not retreat in fear, but go forth to meet them unafraid; you plunge into these karmic entanglements with unwavering courage, without hesitation and without a wish to postpone them, because you have confidence in the good Powers and in your own strength. After crossing the threshold of initiation you will discover that this fortitude of spirit, this fearlessness and unwavering confidence are needed in order that you may pass victoriously through the "trial by fire" awaiting you after your encounter with the Guardian of the Threshold.

For the road leading you to that encounter, I give you these few final words. These are not words of advice, for you no longer need advice and should henceforth always advise yourself; they merely emphasise the things which you must continually remember in life. The farther you ascend the stages of the Path, the more independent you become, the more completely you must rely upon yourself. And this "yourself" is your higher self, that Divine Spark which within you has already grown from a tiny spark into a mighty light. The more closely you unite with this light, the more brightly it will illumine your road and the fuller and more perfect will be your illumination. Advancing briskly and unwaveringly along this bright road, you will not even notice when you have become ready for initiation. Unexpectedly there will come a moment when a luminous figure, that "Great Guardian" of the Threshold, appears before you, takes you by the hand — literally or figuratively, it matters little — and leads you to the gates of the "Temple of Wisdom". Beyond its threshold

trials await you which lead to initiation, and after them you will hear from the Master's lips the words: "Thou art the Path."

When you take leave of someone setting out on a long journey, at the moment of parting you would like to tell him much, very much; you would like to give him a host of advice, directions and warnings for the road. Yet you say nothing, because words seem to you too poor and inadequate. Only at the last moment do you throw him a few words in which you enclose all your good wishes for him. So too I, instead of empty words, will give you for your further journey only this modest wish:

May God guide you!